About Time

Chip's Closet Cleaner

Issue Thirteen

Gal Charlotte: loves nature

CD Clubs: The Dope

Sister Carrie: teaches math

The Bionic Man

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AMAZING POSTAL SCAMS

18 PAGES OF ZINE BOOK & VIDEO REVIEWS

Librarian Porn

PHONE BOOK FROM HELL

Chip pets his monkey

Famous Names

Battling the Man
Protecting Your Privacy

DOG SPAS!

DEATHLY BORING MUSEUMS!

A CLASSIC HOOPS ARTICLE

Brother Chad: gonna be a cop

It's been a while, I know. Busy, as usual, got engaged, edited a book ("The Book of Zines" —look for it Spring 1997), bought a condo, new job, new city and a 76-page guide to Spinal Tap. (Hey, somebody had to do it.) This time around, I've asked some friends to lend a hand, including Candi Strecker, D.B. Velveeda, ScanMan Kevin, Lissa the Proofer, Matt Wolka, Jeff Balch, Aunt Minnie, Jeff Pruzan, Rod Rehn, Bernadette Mayer & Anne Waldman and the beautiful Charlotte Snow. Thanks to everyone. I keep vowing to return to my photocopied, stapled origins, but the pro print job is more fun and I've met many cool people who picked up CCC on the newsstand. If you're surfing the Web, visit The Chip Electric (see page 41) for a collection of past articles, or send me a coupla bucks and I'll mail you issues 10 or 11. Issue 12 is all-digital. The Cleaner has also been blessed with publicity in the New York Times, Harper's, Mademoiselle and elsewhere, although no one saw fit to give the address and expand the CCC universe. Oh well. We'll just keep it our little secret.

Chip's Closet Cleaner is by Chip Rowe, P.O. Box 11967, Chicago, IL 60611-0967 USA. E-mail: chip@playboy.com. World Wide Web page: http://virtumall.com/zines/chip/. ISSN 1064-9719. Back cover: Sister Carrie throws a hissy fit. All contents copyright 1996 Chip Rowe or individual contributors. All unbylined material written by Chip. Some material that first appeared in the all-digital Issue 12 is reprinted here for the benefit of the unwired masses. Chip's Closet Cleaner is available at fine bookstores such as Quimby's (Chicago), Atomic (Baltimore) and Tower (worldwide).

LETTERS TO CHIP

I've been rooting around in your closet on the Internet all morning—perhaps you heard me. I especially liked your professor's comforting comments on your first college paper ("Who Says State Schools Are Easier?," Issue 6). My friends and I used to collect comments that we got on our term papers that could easily apply to life, as well. My favorite was "Lively and entertaining, but unfocused and off-topic." My friend Catherine's was "Lots of insight but too disorganized to succeed ultimately." My friend Sue had two, "Enthusiastic, but fails to live up to potential" and "You've woven a beautiful cocoon, but the butterfly you promised has failed to emerge." And finally, my friend Kevin received, "You have drained your precious ration of ideas in the first 25 words and have failed to impress me in any way. Grade: B+." Who says Canadian universities are easier?

Mary Campbell
King's College
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Howdy, Chip. Thanks for the copy of CCC. You asked about what I'm doing in Tucson. Presently I am trying to reach significant conclusions about issues such as prehistoric subsistence, trade and technological organization from the chipped stone artifacts made by Late Archaic (c. 2000 B.C. to 400 A.D.) populations in the Santa Cruz valley. The process is complicated by the fact that many of the artifacts resemble what you might expect small children to create by repeatedly knocking two rocks together.

Jane Sliva
Tucson, Arizona

With all this cross-marketing going on, you have to wonder when they'll start product placement in the classics. The golden arches could be atop Xanadu in "Citizen Kane." Bogart could pour himself a Miller Lite in "Casablanca," and Ilse could leave with her husband on United. Jack Nicholson could say "Hold the chicken" at a Denny's, and the Bates Motel could have a Red Roof. Meanwhile, Wendy's could offer free Falcon glasses for "The Maltese Falcon," and Burger King could sell toy action figures of Bonnie and Clyde. The Warren Beatty figure, of course, would be anatomically correct. Home of the Whopper indeed.

Why hasn't this trend hit porndom? Think of the tie-in possibilities with mouthwashes alone. Listerine—as seen in "Deep Throat"! Margarine, baby oil, mattress and condom manufacturers don't know what they're missing. Suggest this one to Hef.

John Kupetz
Evanston, Illinois

Thank you for sending your zine, but it's not something we wish to carry. Four bucks is too much and making fun of blind people and mentally retarded people is fucked up ("The Retard Society Meets the Braille Institute," Issue 11). I know you're a middle class white boy but not everyone else has it so easy. Is a cheap laugh worth another's suffering?

Jan
Blacklist Mail Order
San Francisco

Thanks for your review of Batteries Not Included in Issue 11. I've been busier than usual lately because I've been assigned to write third-string fetish reviews for the magazine Video Xcitement. God only knows what madness this will bring in addition to sitting on the foot of the bed at 1 a.m. watching people spank each other with fake whips. Although BNI has brought me a small amount of infamy, it has not yet produced the cash necessary to buy the television or VCR I need so that I don't have to wait until my daughter goes to sleep. I wear earphones so she doesn't have to be kept awake by those awful dubbed-in whip cracks.

Richard Freeman
Yellow Springs, Ohio

Chip, you rule. I just wet my pants.

Tim Zuellig
Chicago

The Washington Post photo in Issue 11 of the guy watching the sky for falling crap was taken by my housemate, Bill O'Leary.

Coincidence? He wants you to know that misappropriation of copyrighted materials is a crime. Watch the skies yourself, pal.

Dave Nuttycombe
Washington, D.C.

The dumb articles in your zine are not worth shit, but since I like the photos in Issue 11 of Charlotte wearing your favorite T-shirts, here's some cash. Too bad you haven't progressed beyond the weird, self-centered screw-up you were as a kid.

Mean Uncle Bob
Hillsborough, North Carolina

Charlotte's cute. How did you meet her? Publishing someone's picture in your magazine legally marries you in Samoa. You can look it up.

In response to your question, "Did Jesus ever have a boner?," the Bible says nothing at all about Jesus' sexuality. I'm sure that scholars and wackos have found extra-Biblical material and others have speculated on his interactions with people in first-century Palestine. This is not to say that Jesus was hetero-, homo- or non-sexual, but rather that the Bible doesn't indicate one way or another. When I was interviewing for a job five years ago I mentioned that the Bible does not record Jesus having laughed. Someone on the committee said, "Yeah, and it never says he went to the bathroom either, but I ain't buying that." The Bible is clear that Jesus was a man. Luke 2:21 tells us that he was circumcised on the eighth day following his birth, so we can infer he had a penis. But nothing that his penis did is mentioned in the Bible.

The Rev. Tom Willadsen
Mankato, Minnesota

I read Issue 11 on an airline flight. The elderly Indian woman sitting next to me (dressed in a traditional sari and full head covering) seemed particularly interested in the cuss word article and masturbation euphemisms.

Anne McSilver
Oakland, California

I thought you'd like to know that although Tony Hendra (a.k.a. Ian Faith, see "Spinal Tap: The Lost Footage," Issue 11) was not carrying a cricket bat when you met him, he is not entirely without his affectations for sports equipment. One of his first executive moves as the new editor of Spy was to install—at the magazine's expense—a full-size punching bag in his office. Needless to say, he never used it. By the way, you should have asked him if he remembered his lines from "Life With Mikey."

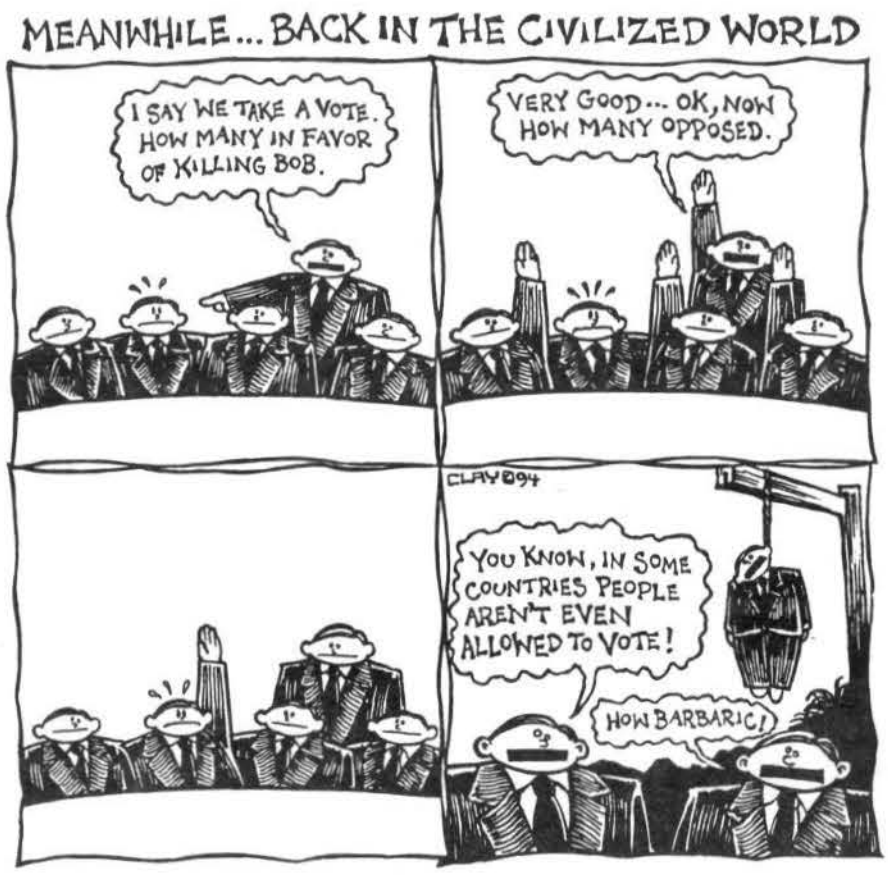
Daniel Radosh
New York

Your Closet Cleaner is looking snazzier all the time, but how many times are you going to milk that tired old Stone Soup rejection letter?

Gabi Solomon
Lawrenceville, New Jersey

How many times do I have left?

You're an absolute nut! The Closet Cleaner has really become a legacy, from grade school to the present. Some of it I love. The "Top Tips" in Issue 11 was nicely funny. But I think you're better and bigger than all of your off-the-wall sex articles and jokes.


MEANWHILE... BACK IN THE CIVILIZED WORLD
I SAY WE TAKE A VOTE. HOW MANY IN FAVOR OF KILLING BOB.
VERY GOOD... OK, NOW HOW MANY OPPOSED.
CLAY©94
YOU KNOW, IN SOME COUNTRIES PEOPLE AREN'T EVEN ALLOWED TO VOTE!
HOW BARBARIC!

(Save those for Playboy.) I just think to myself, "Are those the types of writings you want to be remembered for? And how are you going to find a wonderful lady?" Aren't most girls a little scared of becoming serious with you because of your writings? I say this in sincerity, Chip. You are a wonderful, brilliant man. I'd like to see you evaluate and reconsider your direction.

Lisa Granger
Lansing, Michigan

You should have seen what I was writing in grade school.

Thanks to the info I got from Issue 11 of your zine, several friends and I are now ordained ministers. Take care.

Scott Cornish
New Hartford, New York

I think you need to examine the coupon issue again ("You Say Cheap, I Say Chip," Issue 7). Double and triple coupon redemption changes the equation considerably. Plus, on items for which there are plentiful coupons, it is often cheaper to buy smaller containers with a higher price per ounce several times over than to buy one large container.

Barbara McDonald
Columbia, Missouri

Your Uncle Bill just showed me your disgusting World Wide Web pages. Playgirl magazine? You never mentioned that publication. We were all standing around reading your nice articles out loud and was I embarrassed by the strong sexual content. Didn't I teach you better than to use words like "penis" in public? I still love you, but your father wants to have a little talk with you in your room...right now.

Mom Rowe
Grand Haven, Michigan

I saw your name on the Black Crowes fan club bootleg tape list. I've been a heavy Crowes fan for six years. And I've been to their show 47 times (10 in the U.S., 29 in England and Scotland, eight in Japan). Whenever I'm in the crowd, I feel so good. I think that they used to create a tense atmosphere on the stage, however they've created a more peaceful atmosphere since "Amorica." Do you agree? The harmony of the Robinson brothers is very beautiful. As you might have heard, the Black Crowes canceled their Japan tour dates. My friend Amy met Rich Robinson in Atlanta. When he told her that the band was skipping Japan, she asked, "What

Cartoon by Clay Butler. Send $1 to P.O. 245, Capitola, CA 95010 for more!

The Power of 13

In 1984, Malcolm Riviera of Washington, D.C., founded the Triskaidekaphobia Illuminatus Society, an organization for people who believe the number 13 has the power to affect global events. This being the 13th issue of the Closet Cleaner, we thought it would be interesting to discuss how the number affects our world. Although the TIS officially disbanded in 1990 and the "Encyclopedia of Associations" no longer includes a listing for the group, we managed to track Mr. Riviera down at his new home in North Carolina.

Q: Why did you form the society?

A: To pursue society's fear of 13, known as triskaidekaphobia, in an orderly fashion.

Q: Can the number really affect "the balance of world power and political structures"?

A: We codify everything we know in numbers: the day we're born, "the one true God," our salaries, the number of lovers we've had, the meals we eat in a day, the planets in the solar system. It's natural that some numbers emerge as more significant that others.

Q: Why 13?

A: Our fears are rooted in superstition, such as the number of diners at the Last Supper. Also, it is one more than the "holy" number 12, which is the number of months in the year and the number of hours on a clock, making 13 inherently evil. The way it can affect power is the unconscious awareness of 13's qualities causes leaders to make decisions based on their aversion to it.

Q: The Closet Cleaner headquarters are located on the 13th floor of a high-rise. Should we be concerned?

A: Certainly. Some visitors will refuse to visit your office, thus affecting potential clients. Also, your unconscious fear (that is, the collective triskadekaphobia that affects us all) is magnified.

Q: Can you tell us more about the society's Hall of Fame?

A: It was never completed.

Q: Are the society's books still available?

A: They were confiscated by our creditors. I think they got $77 for the lot. The whole society went down the tubes for less than $100. It still hurts to think about it.

Q: How has the number 13 affected you personally?

A: It's made me realize that nature has alignments and configurations that are messages to mankind if we can only slow down to listen. Time itself is an impossible concept without numbers, and the power of time in our life is indisputable.

Q: What's in store for the world relating to 13?

A: Thirteen will always be a cunning, baffling and powerful foe.

★6395★ TRISKAIDEKAPHOBIA ILLUMINATUS SOCIETY (Parapsychology) (TIS)
c/o Malcolm Riviera
3637 Warren St., N.W. **Phone: (202) 363-8599**
Washington, DC 20008 Malcolm Riviera, Dir.
Founded: 1984. State Groups: 2. Individuals who believe the number 13 has the ability to affect the balance of world power and political structures through the Illuminati (persons who are or who claim to be unusually enlightened). Seeks to isolate seemingly unconnected events caused by the numerical forces inherent in the number 13, correlate the meanings of these events, and develop solutions and strategies. Promotes the organization of Illuminated task forces for the elimination of triskaidekaphobia (fear of the number 13) from society. Plans to develop a think tank. Bestows annual award for the single most significant contribution concerning the power of the number 13. Maintains collection of newspaper and magazine clippings, and videotapes from television shows; operates hall of fame. Working Groups: Literature Research Team; Periodical Research Team; Video/Audio Research Team. Publications: (1) The 13th Illuminated Stratum (newsletter), 2-5/year; (2) Thirteen (editorial report), irregular; also published Fear to Feel the Illuminated Network of 13 Concealed Phantoms (book). Convention/Meeting: annual symposium.

Section 4

about Meg?" He said that she would be OK. Rich, you're wrong! I'll never live at peace without the Black Crowes! I gotta go now. P.S. I'm Chris Robinson's age. I love my generation.

Megumi Fukada
Toki-City Gifu, Japan

Yes, I'm still doing my zine, ecdysis. But I'm also working on an opera to be performed during Ed Wood Jr.'s classic "Plan 9 From Outer Space." This will include all original music and a new plot: a tangled web of love and lust between the living and dead and the human and inhuman.

Matt Wolka
Chicago

The Closet Cleaner is cool, but may I ask a question? Who are you, and why do you do this?

Nadia Ellis
via the Internet

This is probably obnoxious of me, but I feel compelled to pass on my two pieces of Wedding Advice (which of course are my two Wedding Regrets): 1) Make sure your hair looks good the whole time. Don't be shy about looking at yourself in the mirror. There will be a million photos taken that people will stare at for millions of hours afterward. 2) Provide plenty of alcohol. No matter how good everyone feels about you guys getting married, the very idea of marriedness makes people nervous.

Nancy Bonnell-Kangas
Columbus, Ohio

I'm new on the Net, and so far your Web page is the most interesting area I've explored. I have a question for you, and I don't mean to sound like an idiot if you're opposed to this kind of thing, but how do I get to an area that has pictures of beautiful women who are naked? Is it in the cybersex area? If this is not your thing, I apologize and you don't have to answer me.

"G"
via the Internet

I just got back from gun camp where I reported a story about women and guns. It's taking a while to settle down. Last night I dreamed of my 1911-style Colt .45 semi-automatic and getting off two rounds in the chest, one in the head. After three days my hands stopped shaking and I became a rather confident shooter, and even learned how to "clear" a house with my pistol, a

simulated exercise in a cement block house with cartoon "assailants" that made me feel like Jodie Foster in that final scene in "Silence of the Lambs." You've never seen so many white people in your life.

Laura Billings
Portland, Oregon

A friend of mine is writing the kind of stuff you reproduced in "Idiot Nation" (Issue 11). Here's one of his latest instructional guides, for a computer manual:

TO CHANGE DATE
1. Move cursor to date field.
2. Delete date in date field.
3. Enter date in date field.
4. Choose the OK button.

He recently completed a three-year course in technical writing.

Nigel Richardson
Leeds, England

I just read that during the convention of the Infectious Diseases Society of America, medical students staked out restrooms and found that only 56 percent of the male doctors washed up before walking out. I always watch who washes their hands, and it's highly disturbing to notice so many of the faculty members I work with not doing so after relieving themselves. I view it as another sign of the massive ego problems in academe, where these people literally think their excrement doesn't smell or, apparently, carry germs.

I'm also aware of the psychological problems this may reflect with me, especially the massive guilt. But given the evidence for washing hands, I do it whether out of deep-seated psychological problems or a matter of health. The solution? I recommend we all wear full-body condoms. It's the only way to be sure.

John Kupetz (again)
Evanston, Illinois

When I first noticed it, someone had written PEACE LOVE & JIMMY BUFFET on the soon-to-be-demolished AP Parts building in Grand Haven, right? Then BUFFET was whited out (yes, someone actually took the time to cover it up with white paint before they revised it) and HENDRIX was put in its place. Then someone writes "Jesus died for" before the PEACE & LOVE thing. Then someone writes above that PUNK IS NOT DEAD and puts a small, sad-looking anarchy symbol next to it. There was something else on there, too. The light turned green, so I can't remember what it was except that it was mildly rebellious and it was misspelled. Sort of like the kids recently arrested in Muskegon for spray painting "Long live the aireen race!" on a building.

Stephanie Cole
North Muskegon, Michigan

I liked your Boys' State story (Issue 6). It reminded me of the nauseating, flag-waving week I spent at Girls' State. I ended up being the "town reporter," but I didn't write anything rabble-rousing like you did. The program seemed to be run by a gang of nuns. Your story also made me recall that the night before I left for Girls' State was the night I lost my virginity. Thanks for the memories.

Kelly Shriver
Chicago

Love the digital Issue 12 of the Cleaner. My nine-year-old son and I are arguing about the Brady Bunch audio clip you included, "Marcia, Marcia, Marcia!" He says it's from the movie, I say it's from the

Experiences Not Likely To Be Repeated In This Lifetime

Jane explains the concept of "dewpoint" to the Playboy Advisor.
A true story.

I WAS AT A PARTY IN CHICAGO WHEN THE PLAYBOY ADVISOR - I'LL CALL HIM "CHIP" - CHANCED TO STOP BY.
LOOK! "CHIP"!
HE RELATED AMUSING ANECDOTES ABOUT SOME OF THE TRULY STRANGE AND DEPRESSING LETTERS HE GETS. WE WERE IMPRESSED BY HIS WISDOM AND QUICK WIT.
SOMEHOW, THE SUBJECT OF DEWPOINT CAME UP. HE WAS STUMPED, SO I CLUED HIM IN.
WHAT THE HELL IS DEWPOINT, ANYWAY?
UH, IT'S THE AIR TEMPERATURE AT WHICH WATER CONDENSES, OR DEW FORMS. THE HIGHER THE DEW POINT, THE GREATER THE RELATIVE HUMIDITY.
I THINK THAT'S RIGHT
IT WAS LIKE EXPLAINING THE INFIELD FLY RULE TO STEPHEN HAWKING.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THESE THINGS? WHAT ARE YOU, DR. SCIENCE OR SOMETHING?
WHOA.
SILVA (DAN)

from Caterwaul, $2 from 2726 E. Linden, Tucson, AZ 85716

TV show. Can you let us know?

Bob Johnson
Gambrills, Maryland

This picture fell out of the music cabinet when I tried to move it. Great material for the Closet Cleaner.

Dad Rowe
Grand Haven, Michigan

Carrie born; Chip's new truck

It was so nice for John A. Rowe to let Charlie drive me home in his new Buick Riveria. I had other things to give to you, dishes and silver and plates, one in blue from Uncle Boyd Axtell when he traveled to the Munich Olympics in 1980. And one in red, from Italy. Also: a set of dishes, six pieces, six large plates, six medium, six small plates, six cups and saucers, white with a blue design around the edge. A set of eight pieces of silverware, missing one spoon, eight knives, eight forks, seven spoons, eight soup spoons, eight salad forks. I need them now. I'm working on my autobiography, 1905-1995. I just have 1995 to write up, if I don't get another lung infection this year. The good Lord is with me, guiding me all the way. A little song I repeat many times a day, "I need thee, Oh, I need thee, every hour, I need thee, bless me now. Now my savior, I come to thee." I learned it as a child. You had to go back to Chicago, today, Tuesday. Love and best wishes! My humming bird window decorator is gorgeous and is hanging brightly in my window where you placed it for me.

Frances Leah Rowe
Flint, Michigan

My grandmother passed away a few months after she wrote this letter. I miss her more than I can say.

Write Chip at P.O. Box 11967, Chicago 60611 or e-mail to chip@playboy.com

SINCE WE LAST SPOKE

Issue 11

"My Girlfriend Wears My Favorite T-Shirts": Looks so good think I'll marry her.

"Kraft Velveeta and Shells" (review): Somehow, the world's most perfect food got a mention in an article entitled "The Sex-Friendly Apartment" that appeared in the December 1995 issue of Playboy.

New merchandise for "The Catalog From Hell"
COMF-O-MATE "Give yourself a little more room to breath (or eat!). Pants/jeans extender can add a whole size to your waist for those times when you need a bit more room. Fastens easily to regular button and buttonhole, is inconspicuous when covered by a belt buckle or clothing. Comes in 4 colors to go with jeans, skirts or slacks." $3.98

CAR CHRISTMAS TREE "When you can't be home for the holidays, take the Christmas spirit on the road. The festive little 9" high plastic Christmas tree attaches to any interior window of your vehicle with 2 suction cups (included); has 5 miniature lights that plug into the car cigarette lighter. The cord is about 9.5' long so you can attach the tree anywhere in your car. Have tree, will travel." $6.98

HAIR CUTTING SYSTEM "With Flowbee, you and your family can safely get over 1,000 goof-proof precision-layered haircuts in the privacy of your own home...it's guaranteed! Just connect Flowbee to your vacuum and its patented blade design gives you the perfect cut, while the clippings go directly into your vacuum. Will not work on tightly curled hair. Works with most vacuums." $49.99

BARK CONTROL COLLAR "A voice recognition chip memorizes your dog's unique bark and your voice command. Then when your dog barks or you repeat your command, the collar will issue a series of warning beeps. If barking continues, a mild correction is administered, which lasts only as long as the barking continues. You'll be happier because your dog will learn to bark less and your dog will be happier because he's doing what his master wants." $49.99

Issue 10

"Fond Memories of a Fountain That Shot Water in the Air...": According to "The Encyclopedia of Bad Taste" by Jane and Michael Stern, one of the first musical fountains in the United States was the Waltzing Waters near Fort Myers, Florida. The Sterns write, "Billing itself as the 'most elaborate water, music and light production in the world,' Waltzing Waters outdoes all other fountains that spout in tune to music or are lit with colored lights." Unlike Grand Haven's musical fountain, however, Waltzing Waters are displayed inside an auditorium, making them stupid. The technology for Waltzing Waters and musical fountains like it was developed in Germany in the 1930s. The original set-up had a guy who manipulated sprinklers while an orchestra played music. Early on, there was a conductor in a white suit who would stand up and appear to "direct" the waters. There are other Waltzing Waters franchises in Branson, Missouri, and Gatlinburg, Tennessee, as well as a "Living Waters Auditorium" in Strasburg, Pennsylvania, that describes itself as "liquid fireworks." Yeah, yeah, yeah. None of them are *the* musical fountain, now are they?

Issue 6

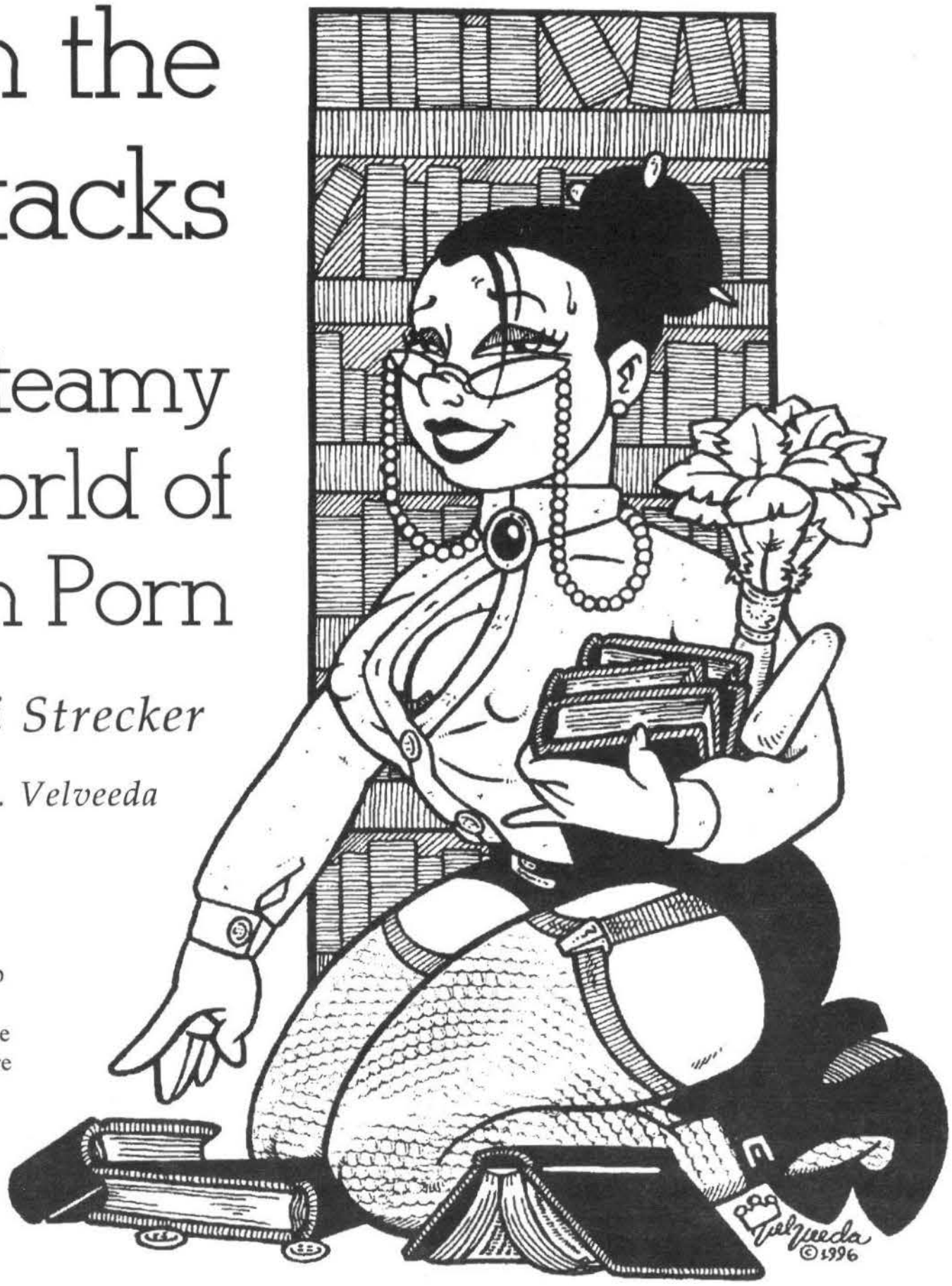
"Closet Cleaners From Hell": In early 1992, I had a crisis of conscience when I discovered that my apartment had been burgled and that one of the criminal minds had apparently relieved himself in my toilet. I didn't want to destroy evidence but I really had to go and finally relented when the cops didn't arrive for two hours. Maybe I should have held out. Last March, someone broke into an apartment in Bristol, Indiana, and stole a Sega video game. The only lead police had was that the perp used the bathroom during the crime but didn't flush. The cops eventually arrested a 13-year-old boy who was well known around the complex for not flushing.

Sex in the Stacks

The Steamy World of Librarian Porn

by Candi Strecker

illustration by D.B. Velveeda



Anyone who has ever checked out a book knows the stereotype about librarians: Thick glasses. Hair pinned up in a bun. Nymphomaniacs.

Nymphomaniacs? Maybe that isn't the first word that pops to mind when you're asking for the name of the seventh dwarf at your local reference desk, but that's definitely the view that reigns within my private collection of librarian porn. I had no idea that such a thing even existed until a friend brought one of these XXX-rated paperbacks to my attention. Since I was a librarian, I found the idea highly amusing, if a bit unlikely. Still, writers often base sexual fantasies on women in the workplace and their uniforms: you'll find bushels of porn about nurses, teachers, nuns. Part of the arousal factor seems to based on the paradox that a woman might be brainy *and* slutty. And even I am not immune to the erotic potential of the library setting, especially the dim and quiet seclusion of the stacks. Exploring the urges of the body in the temple of the mind may be a sacrilege, but it's also a giggly dare.

I actually thought the book my friend had dug up might be the only one of its kind, but once I started showing it off I was showered with other examples. After discarding the even more specialized Bestiality Librarian Porn and Bondage Librarian Porn (plus the books so badly written that they defied arousal), I trimmed my collection down to a select few titles. Let me unbutton your shirt and make you a little more comfortable as I pull a few favorites off the high shelf...

The Librarian Loves to Lick

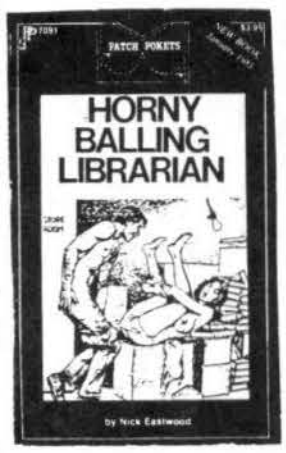
by Frank Warfield, Greenleaf Classics, 1986

One hot night in the life of one hot librarian, described with a little more literary wit than the average stroke book. A personal favorite because the author actually employs the props and activities of library life. We meet librarian Shelly dusting books and amusing herself with the handle of a feather duster. Before the night is out, she does the nasty on top of some of the stacks (the Dewey decimel numbers aren't provided) and on a rolling book cart. Then there's the scene, perhaps the finest in the entire librarian-porn genre, where Shelly catches the prim and proper Professor Adams photocopying his enormous member. Wacky hi-jinks ensue: "The copy

machine flashed on, and the intense light seemed to shoot heat through the cock into Shelly's gently-sucking mouth. Adams started to move his hips in a slow, hypnotic rhythm. The light and warmth flashing in time with the pumping fuck-thrusts into her mouth almost put Shelly into a trance." At the end of her shift, "she took the library stamp and stamped her book several times—once for each climax she had had during the evening."

Horny Balling Librarian

by Nick Eastwood, Greenleaf Classics, 1982
College librarian Sandra is trying to save herself for her marriage to prudish Kurt, but it's so difficult, what with all the teen couples she finds humping in the stacks. After watching one too many of these encounters, she rebels against Kurt and seeks satisfaction on the job with students and co-workers alike. She even attends one of those student orgies we all hear so much about but never seem to get invited to. Kurt eventually comes around.



The Lusty Librarian

by Waldo Beck, Carlyle Communications, 1974
Prim Lynn only spends enough time at the library to get herself invited to a college professors' poker party. Soon enough she's servicing the players, including the professor of Greek: "He fucked her up the ass with precision and control and a strangely disciplined delight." The next morning, realizing that her reputation in this small town is ruined, she withdraws her savings from the bank and flees to a resort in Spain. Here she meets other decadent Americans, including a swinging couple who converse in that witty, brittle way found only in books. Lynn finds true love, but only after gang-banging the members of the hotel mariachi band.

Bang the Librarian Hard

by Laura Winters, Greenleaf Classics, 1985
Which are better, hardbodied students or studly faculty? Fortunately, ultra-nympho high school librarian Samantha can indulge herself with the cream of both groups. We've all suspected that school athletic staff facilities are better than those that mere teachers get to use, and Samantha's visit to the coach's office proves it: "Coach Able pressed a button, and as if by magic, a queen-sized bed covered with turquoise silk sheets appeared from behind a wall." This book shamelessly employs Plot Device #478-C: Samantha drains the Vital Bodily Fluids of the opposing basketball team's stars so her own Madison High can win the playoffs.

Eager Young Librarian

by J.D. Blackwood, Greenleaf Classics, 1985
Is it just me or are all these books starting to sound alike? Sensuous Naura finds hot nookie at her new library job, with students, adult patrons, and fellow book shufflers. If only that mean old frigid head librarian would stop following her around and cramping her style. Bonus: lesbian Jacuzzi sex scene.

Eager-to-Spread Librarian

by Don Scott, Greenleaf Classics, 1985
Principal Summers convinces insatiable librarian Crystal to use her seductive powers to investigate a gang of students using their own sexual wiles to gain access to school computers and change their grades. (Maybe they should reissue this novel as "Teen Slut Hackers.") Specialty scene: hood-of-car gang bang with teenage delinquents.

Licking the Librarian

by Hank Borden, Greenleaf Classics, 1983
"'Oh wow!' he said. 'I really had fun popping your cherry.' Alice wished she could say the same thing, but the fact was she didn't enjoy the rape at all." Well, *duh*. But that's the great thing about porn novels—you can skip over the chapters that don't turn you on. After the ugly events of Chapter One, librarian Alice is understandably sex-shy. But by watching some teens humping in the stacks (doesn't anyone do it on their parents' bed anymore?), Alice learns that sex can be gentle and loving. After that, it's Katie-bar-the-door. She starts wearing sexier dresses too. Author's favorite ejaculatory exclamation: "Your mouth/cunt/-prick is murder!"

The Librarian's Hot Urges

by Nick Eastwood, Greenleaf Classics, 1984
Virginal school librarian Pam is so thrilled to meet her new employer, Principal Jim, that she heads straight home to take a hot bath. Soon, she has a revelation: "Finally, it dawned on her what had happened. 'My gosh,' she breathed. 'That must have been an orgasm.' " She has much to learn, but thankfully there's a freaky exhibitionist married couple next door, and horny teens carrying on in the stacks (where else?). Caught spying on a teenage gang-bang, Pam is forced to join in and loses her cherry six different ways. Caught in the act, she finds a special way to earn Principal Jim's forgiveness.

Horny Peeping Librarian

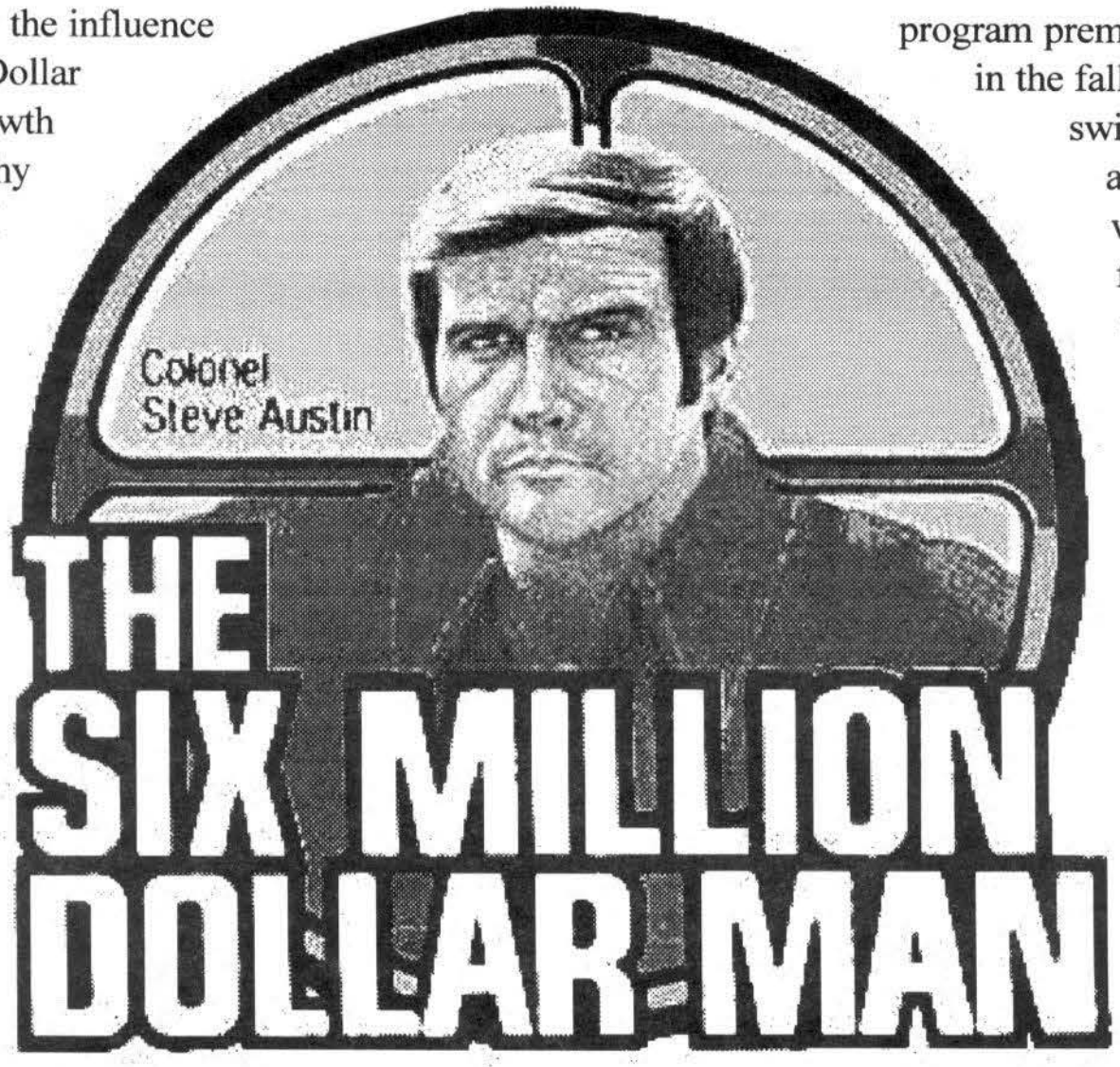
by Frank Brown, Greenleaf Classics, 1984
Voluptuous librarian Sue gets it on with high school boys in various nooks and crannies of the public library—and of her anatomy, right down to her toes. While this isn't full-fledged foot-fetish porn, the author slips in enough references to make his personal tastes clear. "You've got hot feet, lady," one teen pants. All this action on library time jeopardizes Sue's job, but she saves her position by doing it doggie-style with the head librarian. Favorite line: "The two boys fucked her with blinding speed, their rampant pricks reaming out her fuckholes like high-speed drills." (Oh, Mr. Black! Oh, Mr. Decker!)

The Hottest Librarian

by Gary F. Woods, Oakmore Enterprises, 1985
Burdened by low self-esteem, Gussie Fennimore might have remained forever a virgin working at the college library. But a blind date recognizes that inside those prim clothes, volcanic passions lurk. Within hours, she's left a trail of sexual conquests stretching across campus. Along the way, she encounters a bewildering range of penis shapes: stumpy, crooked, pencil-thin and the ever-popular Enormous. Though Gussie loses her cherry, she keeps her bun: "[The girl] could see the shiny knot of hair at the back of Miss Fennimore's head and her naked ass sticking up in the air and everything. It was really neat!" ■

Candi Strecker, no longer a librarian but still collecting librarian porn, chronicles the '70s in her zine "It's a Wonderful Lifestyle" ($4 from P.O. Box 515, Brisbane, CA 94005). You can learn more about D.B. Velveeda's lusty work by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Quimby's Book Store, 1328 N. Damen Ave., Chicago, IL 60622.

We Can Revive Him



It's hard to quantify the influence "The Six Million Dollar Man" had on my growth and development. Why as an eight-year-old I thought I could catch up to people on the playground by running slower is beyond me. But looking back, wasn't that the most ingenious part of the show? The producers knew kids would be trying to run faster than the bad guy's car and smashing into sign posts and getting hurt. So they made him run super slow while really running super fast! And how about those sound effects! You really felt like you were strong when you made that metallic *daderdaderdader* with your tongue.

I stayed up to watch that episode where Jaime Sommers got in a parachute accident and she and Steve Austin had been in love but then she didn't remember their love! But she did get to be bionic. I cried myself to sleep, longing for something I did not understand. I was also too young to wonder if Steve had a bionic penis, but now I do.

Steve Mandich, the editor of the excellent zine "Heinous," told me about a girl he dated once who was so enamoured of bionics that she planned to have circuitry tattooed on her arm. That's what this couple meant to American kids of the 1970s. They taught us to strive for more. Watching Jaime and Steve run and jump, we knew we could be bionic too—in everything we do! It didn't matter that sometimes our heroes inexplicably used the wrong arm to lift a boulder, or that the shows were often so corny as to be unwatchable, at least now, when I catch them on the Sci Fi Channel. They were machines who never lost their humanity.

"The Six Million Dollar Man" began with a series of TV movies that aired on ABC in the spring and fall of 1973, starring Lee Majors (real name Harvey Lee Yeary II) as Colonel Steve Austin. The weekly program premiered on Friday nights in the fall of 1974, then switched to Sundays after it caught on. It was cancelled in 1978 following its sixth season. One episode introduced the Bionic Woman, who then got her own show on Wednesday nights beginning in 1976. That program switched to Saturdays during its third and final season.

In 1987, NBC aired a made-for-TV movie, "Return of the Six Million Dollar Man and the Bionic Woman," followed in 1989 by "Bionic Showdown." In 1994, CBS put together "Bionic Ever After?" They were all awful, but I was also a lot older and had been running full speed on the playground for years by then.

Those are the basics. I asked Rod Rehn, who has compiled an extensive Internet site devoted to both shows and is probably the foremost authority on bionics in pop culture, to fill in the details. Here is his **Top Secret** report:

"The Six Million Dollar Man" was born with Martin Caidin's 1972 novel "Cyborg," which inspired three ABC movies produced by Universal. Like Caidin's novels, "Cyborg" took itself quite seriously. In the television show that followed, however, the protagonist became a comic book superhero to attract younger viewers. As a result, some later episodes of

Best Bionic Man Episodes

Population: Zero: I liked Steve's reaction when a woman he's working with asks about his bionics. "How do you feel?" she says, to which Steve responds (with extreme sarcasm): "Peachy, doc. Just peachy!" And how about when Steve rips a pole out of the ground and throws it at Dr. Bacon's van? All right, Steve!

Stranger in Broken Fork: This episode pulls at all your emotional strings. When Steve realizes what he is, after forgetting (he has amnesia in this episode), he becomes scared . . . of himself.

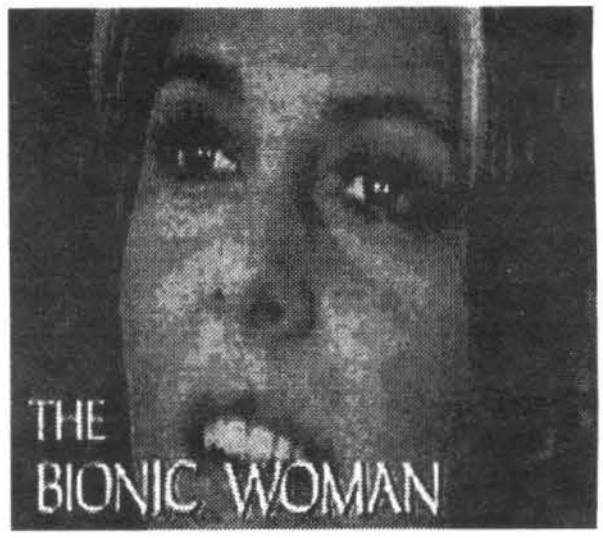
The Bionic Woman episodes (four): All of the Bionic Woman episodes are classic. Lee finally showed that his acting ability isn't limited to being a smart-ass, wisecracking, know-it-all American superhero.

The Secret of Bigfoot (two): Watching Steve and Bigfoot toss each other around is a blast!

Death Probe (two): The Death Probe looked great, plus it was nearly indestructible. How the heck was Steve going to pull this one off?

Killer Wind: Steve plays a real big hero in this one, saving children trapped in a suspended cable car during a hurricane.

Best Bionic Woman Episodes



The Deadly Missiles: Jaime infiltrates a secret building and has to overcome its defenses, but in the process one of her bionic legs becomes damaged. So she has to find a way to repair it, and somehow put a stop to a radar jamming device that she discovers in the secret facility. Then, a lá "Population: Zero," she flings a pole she tore out of the ground.

Winning is Everything: Jaime manages to change the character of a race car driver who goes from being a pompous, conceited ass to someone who realizes that winning *isn't* everything.

The Jailing of Jaime: Jaime's been framed for stealing a top secret decoder. But the Bionic Woman busts out of her cell in triumphant bionic fashion to track down the *real* bad guys. Then, near the end, she gets trapped in a vault that's about to blow! Can her bionic strength save the day?

Kill Oscar (three): These episodes are possibly the finest of either series. John Houseman's *portrayal of* Dr. Franklin was fantastic. Never was there a villain like this. Lastly, of course, these episodes had those crazy, eerie, blasted...Fembots!

All for One: This episode was ahead of its time: indirectly talking about the Internet, personal computer protocols (which were then in their infancy) and hacking (the revolution had just begun). Pretty amazing.

—*R.R.*

"The Six Million Dollar Man" were downright cartoonish. There are times when I could only shake my head at its stupidity.

The premise of the weekly program was that astronaut Steve Austin, after crashing during a test flight of an experimental NASA aircraft, received cybernectic replicas of his left eye, right arm and both legs. His new legs allowed him to race automobiles and jump higher or farther than anyone living. His arm and legs could lift incredible weights and bend, break or smash materials impossible for normal people to even scratch. His bionic eye could not only see farther and with more precision than a human eye, he could also see infrared.

After receiving the bionics, Steve became an agent for the Office of Scientific Intelligence. The OSI had provided the funds to make Steve bionic, and now he repayed them by working on secret, always dangerous, missions.

In 1975, in an effort to "humanize" the show and attract a larger female audience, the producers introduced a new character—the Bionic Woman. Jaime Sommers, a tennis pro in her late 20s, had been orphaned at the age of 16 when her parents died in an automobile accident. Since the tragedy, Steve's parents had acted as Jaime's guardians. After losing track of each other, Steve and Jaime reunited in their hometown of Ojai, California.

Several months later, Jaime had a near-fatal accident. Steve asked Jaime to go skydiving with him, but somehow her parachute became entangled and she plummeted to the ground. Her right arm was broken severely, along with both legs. Also, her inner ear on the right side was damaged. In desperation, Steve persuades Oscar to approve bionic surgery for Jaime.

Jaime recovers, and Steve prepares to marry her. But that's when Oscar wants a return on his investment: Jaime must complete an OSI mission. Jaime does so, but a problem develops. Her immune system begins rejecting her bionics. She is rushed into surgery but dies of a massive clot in her brain.

The Bionic Woman episodes were aired near the end of the second season of "The Six Million Dollar Man" and were not meant to be continued. The contract Universal had made with Lindsay Wagner, who played Jaime, had been fulfilled, and the actress wanted to move on. But the Bionic Woman was so popular with viewers, the producers persuaded her to come back. In the episode entitled "The Return of the Bionic Woman," a doctor lowers Jaime's body temperature minutes after she is declared dead, and the clot is removed. Sadly, Jaime loses some of her memory and doesn't remember her romance or life with Steve.

Besides Jaime and the show's sound effects, the thing most people remember immediately about "The Six Million Dollar Man" is the opening crash sequence:

"It looks good at NASA One."—Flight Com
"Roger."—B-52 Pilot
"BCS Arm switch is on."—B-52 Pilot
"Okay, Victor."—Flight Com
"Lining Rocket Arm switch is on."—B-52 Pilot
"Here comes the throttle."—B-52 Pilot
"Circuit breakers in."—B-52 Pilot
"We have separation."—Steve
"Roger."—SR-71 Chase Plane Pilot
"Inboard and outboards are on."—B-52 Pilot

"I'm comin' forward with the side stick."—B-52 Pilot
"Looks good."—Flight Com
"Ah, Roger."—B-52 Pilot
"I've got a blow-out in damper three!"—Steve
"Get your pitch to zero."—SR-71 Chase Plane Pilot
"Pitch is out! I can't hold altitude!"—Steve
"Correction, Alpha Hold is off. . . Turn selectors . . . Emergency!"—B-52 Pilot
"Flight Com! I can't hold it! She's breaking up, she's break—"—Steve

"Steve Austin. Astronaut. A man barely alive."—Narrator (Harve Bennett)

"Gentlemen, we can rebuild him. We have the technology. We have the capability to make the world's first bionic man. Steve Austin will be that man. Better than he was before. Better . . . stronger . . . faster."—Oscar Goldman

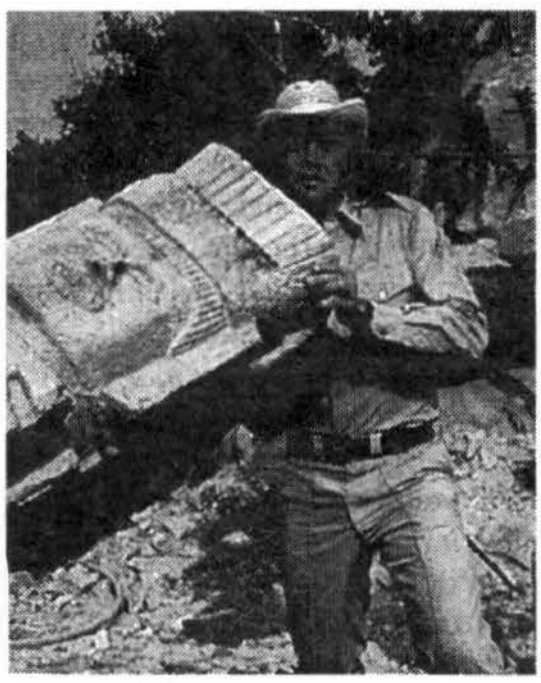
The aircraft seen crashing in the show's opening sequence was an M2-F2, a "flying body configuration" built by Northrup. The audio is from an actual crash that occurred on May 10, 1967, at Edwards Air Force base in California. The test pilot, Bruce Peterson, hit the ground at 250 mph, tumbling six times. He lost use of his right eye and had to stop flying, ending his career. Understandably, Peterson has said that he hated reliving his accident, week after week, courtesy of Steve Austin.

If you watch a lot of "The Six Million Dollar Man" and "The Bionic Woman," as I do, you'll notice they have an abundance of corny moments and lame special effects. One reason for this is that Universal was infamous in the 1970s and early 1980s for cranking out shows on the cheap and for recyling stock footage, scripts, locations, sets, props, effects and actors. The angry robot sounds in at least two "Six Million Dollar Man" episodes

were recycled from the Don Knotts film "How to Frame a Figg," for example. Similarly, the submarine footage in just about every episode of both shows came from a 1973 Universal film, "Ice Station Zebra." For any episode that called for a "nuclear device," Universal invariably drew upon the same footage: a cylinder being loaded into the rear of a large military prop plane. If the episode featured an "evacuation," more of this same kind of military stock footage was used.

It's not like Universal didn't have any cash. They were making a fortune on bionic toys alone, as was Kenner, which made and sold them for $6 or $7 each. The original Steve Austin doll was 13 inches tall and wore a red fabric NASA-style jumpsuit and red sneakers. Through a hole in the back of his head (ouch!) you could peer through his bionic eye—a wide-angle telescopic lens. His right arm featured roll-back rubber "skin" that revealed removable bionic components. Also, by hitting a button in the back (after twisting his head to the right) Steve's bionic right arm could lift objects weighing up to two pounds. You even got a plastic engine block for him to lift. Later, a second version of the doll was produced with "Bionic Grip."

The Oscar Goldman doll wore a polyester jacket, beige slacks and brown leather shoes. Oscar came with an attaché case full of gear for directing OSI assignments. If opened the wrong way by someone unauthorized, the case would explode by having a panel fly off and the interior electronic systems short out. Inside the case, a secret compartment held a manila folder with mission documents for Steve Austin and a viewer you could adjust with a dial to see information on a video screen.



The Sasquatch doll, meanwhile, towered over everybody at 15 inches. It was made entirely of brown plastic molded to look like fur and had a pressure point Steve could hit so a panel will fly off to reveal the monster is actually a machine.

Steve also had a few bionic assessories. His "Critical Assignment Arms" came with a fabric T-shirt, and there were three bionic arms you could interchange with the original. The Laser Arm shot a red light beam. The Neutralizer Arm did karate chops and had a "sonic stunner" gun. The Oxygen Supply Arm had a retractable oxygen mask that fit in a hidden compartment. All the arms, like the original, featured roll-back rubber skin that revealed removable bionic parts. There were also Critical Assignment Legs that came with a pair of fabric shorts.

Naturally, the Bionic Woman held a substantial share of the bionic toy market. The original doll came with a fabric top and jeans and white plastic sneakers. It was shorter than the male doll, measuring just over a foot. If you turned the head from side to side, you could hear a "ping" sound that was supposed to represent the bionic ear. Panels in the thighs could be removed to reveal bionic parts. The jeans had lift-off patches that allowed access to the circuits—a nice feature. The Jaime figure also had "combable" blonde hair.

A later Jaime Sommers doll had feet that could turn and wore a blue jumpsuit and platform shoes instead of a jogging suit. It also came with a vinyl "Mission Purse" that contained a wallet, money, credit cards, a mission assignment, snapshots of Steve and Oscar, a comb, a brush, a cosmetic case with make-up, a map case with two maps and Morse code.

Naturally, no Bionic Woman is complete without a Styling Boutique, so as not to neglect her feminine side. The boutique came with an eleven-inch tall bust of Jaime and a make-up tray with cosmetics, comb, brush, curlers and ribbons. There was also a line of fashion clothes for the figure, all of which included plastic shoes.

Toys are more fun when you're a kid because it's easier to suspend belief. As an adult watching the Bionic Couple, you can't help notice that the writers of both shows rarely respected the rules of common sense. For instance, how could Jaime be an asset as a "secret" agent when she was an up-and-coming tennis star? Steve may have been a famous astronaut, but it's more believable that he could succeed undercover. After all, aside from Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, how many astronauts would you recognize on the street? Another thing that bugs me about the shows: Why does everyone who ends up with bionics always lose their right arm in an accident? Steve, Jaime and their son Michael all lost a right arm. What are the odds of that? And can you imagine having one normal leg and one bionic leg? You couldn't do anything right: running (limping), jumping (hopping), kicking (falling).

We laugh, but there was a dark side to the popularity of the shows. Many young boys would *purposely* try to injure themselves because they wanted to have bionic implants like Steve. A 7-year-old in Philadelphia pretended to be blind, for instance, in order to get a "bionic eye." He also tried stopping the family car by drag-

Worst Six Mill Episodes

Burning Bright: Guest star William Shatner talks to dolphins. That's all you need to know.

The Peeping Blonde: This is the second of several episodes that signal the start of the diabolical "Farrah Fawcett (Lee Major's wife) must be in as many episodes as possible!" plot.

A Bionic Christmas Carol: Not even having Ray Walston, Dick Sargent and Adam Rich (before his "Eight is Enough" fame) as guest stars could save this turkey.

Date with Danger (two): These episodes are so dumb. A computer that can understand what you say on the phone and send a surge through the line to blow up a phone booth?! I'm outta here!

—*R.R.*

ging his foot on the ground. The Philadelphia Inquirer alerted Universal Studios, and Lee Majors wrote the boy to tell him that the bionic stunts on the show were fantasy.

Let's take a closer look at bionics and their properties. There were at least five episodes of "The Six Million Dollar Man" in which it's stated that bionics don't work in the cold, for starters. This was certainly just a device to create situations where Steve or Jaime couldn't easily escape. "Oh, no! My bionics don't work! Now what am I going to do?" If we were talking about temperatures like minus 60 degrees celsius or lower, then I could believe it. The bionic's lubricants would thicken, and the "plastiskin" could become brittle. But at those temperatures, Steve or Jaime would die from the exposure long before their bionics failed.

Steve also had difficulty once with his bionics while he was in space. His eye goes blurry and his bionic limbs become weak. Later, at the end of the episode, Oscar tells Steve that with a "new extra layer" to his plastiskin, he will be able to go back into space without having to worry anymore. What the hell? I think Steve suffering from "space madness" would have been much more interesting.

Just how bionics work was never explained. The most viewers were ever told was that Steve and Jaime had internal atomic power packs. This would mean fissionable material, most likely enriched Uranium-235 or Plutonium-239. The process of fission would generate tremendous heat, which could be converted to electricity to power actuators in the limbs. *But how is the heat converted to* electricity?

There are only two plausible ways:

■ Turbine. Use the heat to boil a heat-transfer medium, probably water or perhaps liquid sodium. Then use the medium to spin a turbine that's connected to a generator.

■ Thermoelectric. Apply the generated heat to a thermocouple, which is two dissimilar metals that are joined to each other. Because the metals are not the same and are in close proximity, an electrical potential will be generated which causes a flow of electricity.

I would have to go with the first possibility. Thermoelectric power sources are notoriously inefficient and sometimes bulky—even if they do have the advantage of no moving parts. Also, in "The Moon and the Desert," when Dr. Wells shows Steve the bionic arm, he mentions it has an "atomic-powered generator." That nixes the idea of a thermocouple.

Something that really bothers me is where the energy supply to Steve's eye is coming from. The show seems to hint the power pack for the eye is inside his head! This is much too dangerous. (It's not a battery, although it should be. And power isn't fed from the limbs, either.) In this case, it would have to be a thermocouple. There's not enough room for a turbine and generator inside Steve's skull.

Another source of consternation is the bionic arm. Many times on both shows, Steve and Jaime treated both arms as being bionic. For example, in one episode of "The Bionic Woman," Jaime grabs a falling bad guy and ties one of his feet to the rail with some electrical cord. The problem is that when she does it, with bionic speed, she's using her left hand. Tsk, tsk. In the "Love Song for Tanya" episode of "The Six Million Dollar Man," a bad guy swings at Steve, who blocks the blow with his left arm. Why, then, do we hear a bionic "thud"?

Another thing with the arms: Steve always manages to get himself out of a fix by breaking the ropes or cuffs binding him. Somehow, his normal arm is never broken from this stress. Did they secretly replace it with bionics? The Bionic Woman writers generally avoided this blunder. In both "Rodeo" and "Which One is Jaime?" Jaime even explains to a fellow captive that if she breaks the bonds, she'll break her arm.

There are many other bloopers that have less to do with the dynamics of bionics and more with simple carelessness. In "Doomsday and Counting," Steve is clearing away rubble at an underground Russian base when a rock bops him on the head. (Ouch!) In "The Song and Dance Spy," when Steve lifts John Perry (Sonny Bono) to the top of a crate, Bono's hair makes it apparent that the scene is being shown in reverse. In "The Golden Pharaoh," Steve and Oscar pretend to be workers for a fictitious gas company but remove a manhole cover that reads "Electric Power" (some spies you guys are). And in "A Bionic Christmas Carol," notice how Steve grabs a magnifying glass to examine a piece of metal. Whatsa matter, Steve—your bionic eye busted?

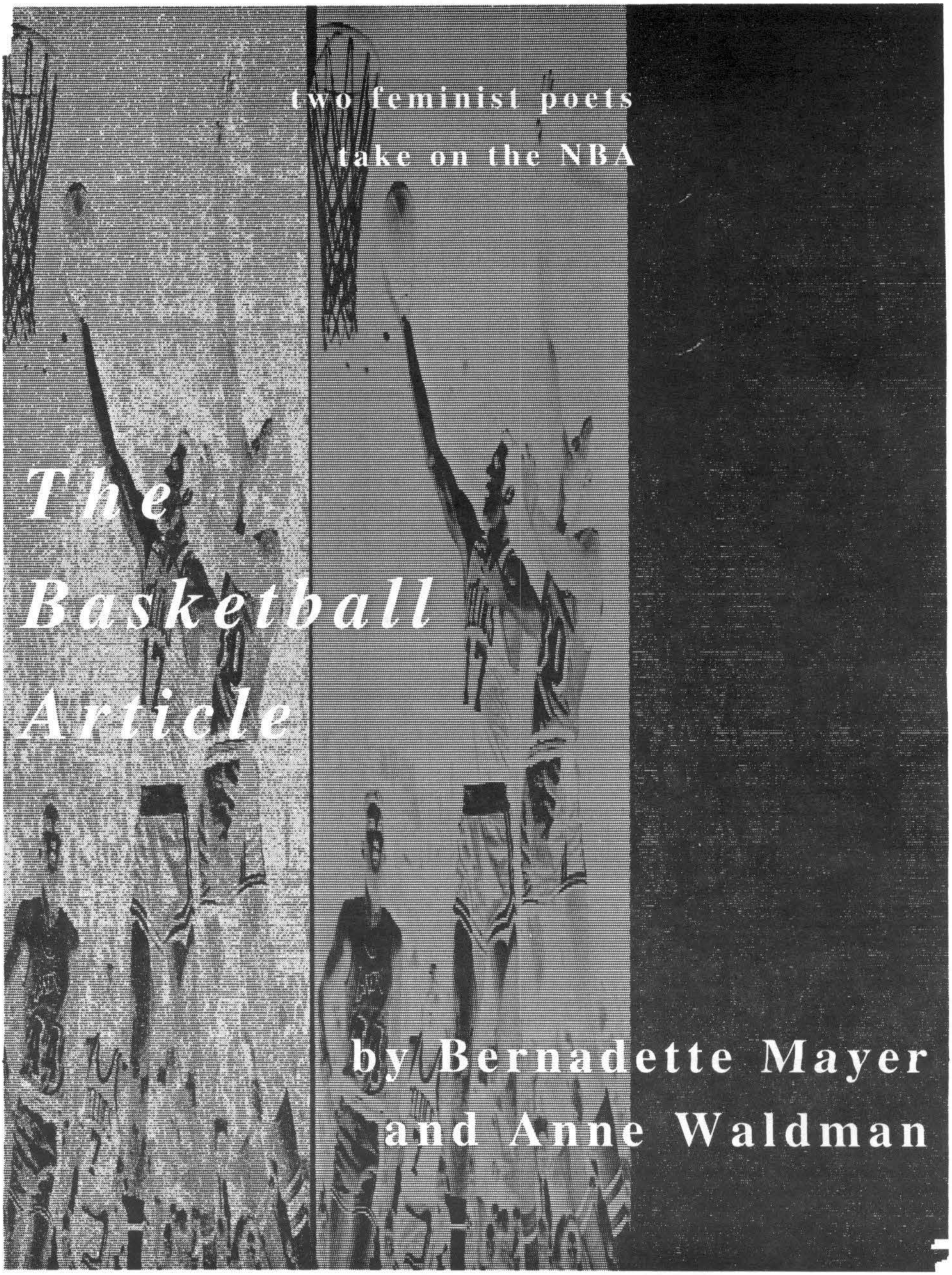
The Bionic Woman also had its share of gaffes. In diving scenes during the episode "Deadly Music," there's a lot of talking going on even though everyone is wearing mouthpieces. And in "On the Run," after Jaime decides to quit the agency and runs off, the government puts out a nationwide all-points bulletin. Some secret undercover agent she'll make now! No wonder the show was canceled. ■

Bionic Limitations

Running Speed : 66 mph
Swimming Speed : Approx. 35 knots (40mph)
Jumping Height : 30 feet
Jumping Length : Approx. 45 feet
Lifting Weight :
Using arm - Approx. 1000 lbs. or 1/2 ton
Using legs - Approx. 4500 lbs. or 2 1/4 tons
Applied Force:
Using arm - 2100 ftlb/sec.
Using legs - Approx. 9500 ftlb/sec.
Bending Abilities : Can bend 1 inch thick steel
Penetrative Abilities : Able to punch or kick through at least 6 inches of concrete, and punch or kick through thin plates of solid metal (say, 1/8 inch).
Zoom Distance : Approx. 200 yards (Steve's eye)
Hearing Distance : Approx. 1/2 mile (880 yards) for a person speaking at normal volume (50 decibels) (Jaime's ear)

Bionic Resources

As of this writing, "The Six Million Dollar Man" and "The Bionic Woman" air on the Sci Fi Channel on weekdays. The programs are not available on video. For more details, point your World Wide Web browser to the Bionic Home Page at http://www.scifi.com/bionics/



two feminist poets
take on the NBA

The Basketball Article

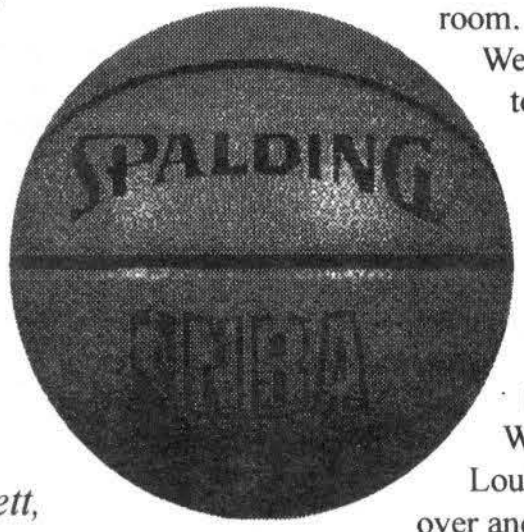
by Bernadette Mayer
and Anne Waldman

The Basketball Article was conceived in November 1974 & written in April 1975 as an assignment for Oui magazine. We got to go to all the Nets games we wanted through Barney Kremenko, Publicity, but Jim Wergeles of the Knicks balked. "What do you girls really do?" We heard he was a jock. We went to the first women's basketball game held in Madison Square Garden. We wrote a review that was rejected for being too technical. We tried not to make "The Basketball Article" too technical so it was rejected by a group of editors, a few of whom thought it "was a minor masterpiece," the others "couldn't tell what the hell was going on" in it. We were rejected by the Village Voice for whom the work was not technical enough. An agent told us "The Basketball Article" was fragmented and could not be handled. We never got into the locker room. A purely prophetic work in the tradition of social realism, "The Basketball Article" is duplicated here in an edition of 100 copies by a Gestetner 420 mimeograph machine using green film stencils no. 62. We express our thanks to Mr. DeBusschere, Mr. Kremenko, Mr. Padgett, Mr. Rezek, Mr. Robertson and Mr. Warsh.

BM July 15 1975

The orange ushers of the Coliseum begin to wonder if smoking Sherman's makes you sexy. Should they smoke them? What magazine? Oui. We begin to dress in red, white and blue, we do not stand up for the national anthem. We always sit next to the opposing team. We distract them. We enter in their consciousness. We carry a copy of Shakespeare's sonnets with us. We wear lipstick. We cheer for both teams. We watch mostly defense, sitting at the far end of the court. We watch Stan Love sitting on the bench. He gives us the eye. We bring Dante to the games. We watch the players who sweat & the players who don't sweat, the players who accept a towel and the ones who throw it away. We watch the angry players and the players who don't give a shit towards the end of the season. We watch the rookies carefully, wondering if they'll get to play. A rookie from San Antonio plays a few minutes, finally, walks three times, scores twice and gets back on the bench.

San Antonio has the raunchiest looking team in the league. It's their hair. The San Antonio Spurs. Their coach says nothing to them. We watch him mouthing words at the referees. We listen to George Gervin, fouled out, call the referee a motherfucker and spur Swen Nater on to beat the shit out of him. We watch Nater circle around the ref, "Nate" a simple lion in the Coliseum, all eyes, the referee ignores him. Nater who said, "I wouldn't mind being in movies but they'd think I'm a monster." Jabbar's taken it to court—can you criticize the referees after the game. We feel the muscles of the players.



Women aren't allowed in the locker room. We go to the press room. We watch the players who, towards the end of the game, lean back, stretching their shoulder muscles. Occasionally we wink at them. We can, we're at the press table. Somebody's taking pictures of us. Two women. We watch the Spirits of St. Louis. Marvin Barnes leans over and says, "Why don't you put me in there (Oui) with all those girls?" We assure him we'll see what we can do. We listen to him get serious, he says, "It feels good playing the best in the world." The Nets? Maybe.

We watch the black players take over the game. We count the number of whites on the floor. Three, now four. We watch the white coaches. We see the kind of joking being a professional creates. The fans write in the bathrooms: "I love Kevin Loughery." The players shout: "You watch him jumpin' into Mosey, he's jumpin' into him," and, to the ref, "I know you don't want us to win and I know you're a motherfucker but this is too much, you jack-off." We stare at the glitter jackets of the Spirits of St. Louis and at the black bell-bottom pants of the San Antonio Spurs as they snap them off to get into the game. Some of the players hide when they do this. The players shout: "The spread's comin' " and "beaten by a dead dog all the time." The fans say, "They took the knife on him," talking about Dr. J.

We remember DeBusschere's heel bone coming through his arch, we remember when Julius Erving married Turquoise Brown and now they have a fine child. We think about nicknames: Rainbow, The

THE BASKETBALL ARTICLE

I discovered a copy of The Basketball Article (16 mimeographed pages between two cardstock covers) while browsing at Arundel Antiquarian Books in Los Angeles in 1995. It is not known how many copies of the article, which might be described as an early zine, still exist. Ms. Mayer and Ms. Waldman generously provided permission to reprint. I considered footnotes but decided knowing the players' stats and histories was not necessary to appreciate the authors' observations and poetic language.

Doctor, Mr. K, The Pearl, Hondo, Salty Dog, Ice. We remember Gene Conley, a forward for the Celtics and a pitcher for the Red Sox, Rick Barry's broken elbow, Jabbar's demand to leave Milwaukee, the great George McGinnis no-trade, Nate-the-roller-skate, all the ones named Love and Jones, one Love a brother of a Beach Boy, two Silases and a Price. We can still picture Bill Walton sitting on a bench during practice with Jack Scott's dog named Sigmund in the middle of the Patty Hearst scene and then his house goes up for sale. Phil Jackson reads Carlos Castaneda. Bill Bradley'll sign a ten-year contract with options if the Knicks could get Jabbar. Frazier asks who'll be left to play with him.

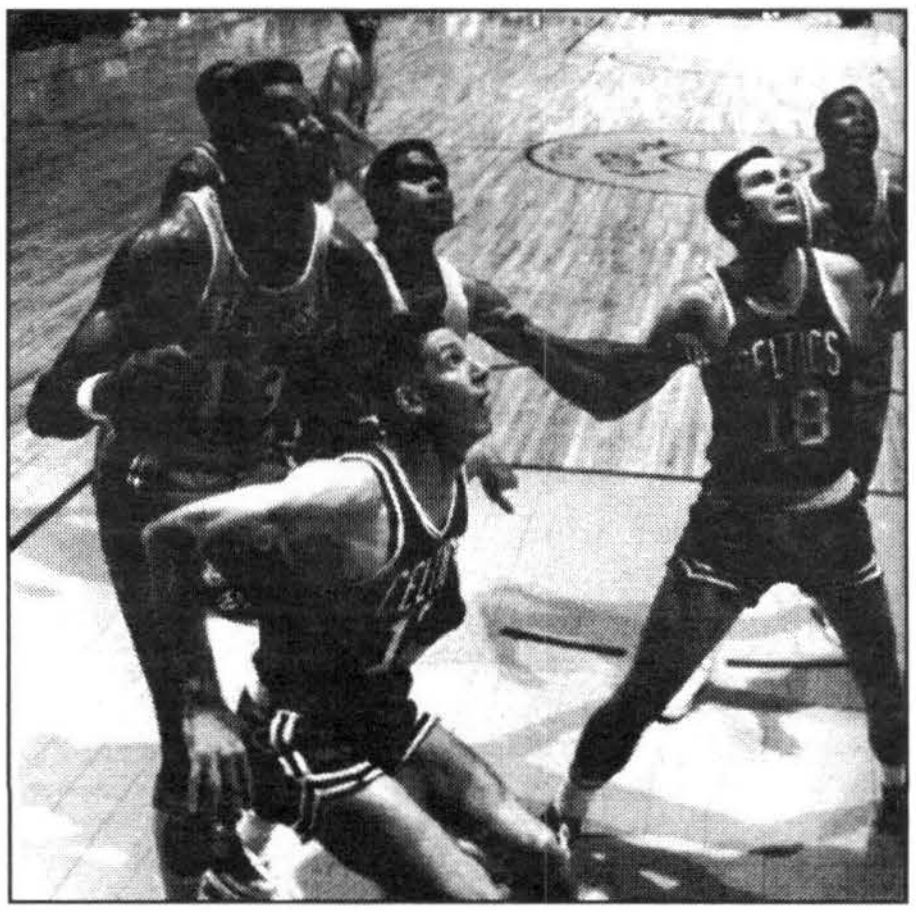
> "Basketball is more heroic than rock 'n' roll"—he has ripped stomach muscles and seven busted noses.

We watch the players being told what to do. We watch them doing it. We watch the 3-point plays in the ABA, Dampier, Erving, McGinnis. We watch UCLA beat Kentucky in John Wooden's last year. We watch Walt Frazier's bed and Wilt Chamberlain's bed and think of the players' ages. We watch Dick Barnett be an assistant coach and Jim Barnett fuck up. We see Gianelli get taller and offend Jabbar. Exploding on the boards, tickling the laces, going from downtown. The players put their gum on the press table. The Nets lose on TV, but not in the Nassau Coliseum.

Dave DeBusschere dreams that he is really awake, he can't scream, can't move. He dreams that over again.

We get off the Meadowbrook parkway at the Mineola exit, go west on Old Country Road, one block past Glen Cove Road to the Marine Midland Bank Building where DeBusschere sits in front of a bright blue wall in the general manager's office of the New York Nets. We give him books of our poetry. He autographs copies of "The Open Man" for us. We dress in red, white and blue. DeBusschere ("from the bush country of the Alps") has the radio on, Elton John. He answers the phone "This is he." We think about the Knicks this year but don't ask. He leases a car. "Basketball is more heroic than rock 'n' roll"—he has ripped stomach muscles and seven busted noses. He doesn't like officials who are visible. He wants to see men and women play two on two and used to drink coffee before the game. We sit in front of pictures of DeBusschere and Robert Redford, DeBusschere and Dustin Hoffman. He likes the Nets, he likes "Salty Dog" Paultz who lives on the beach. He doesn't want to coach, he says he doesn't coach. At the game later we catch him talking to Brian Taylor, he denies it. He becomes Vice President of the ABA, then Commissioner.

New York Nets vs. Salt Lake City Utah Stars. Nassau Coliseum. Larry Kenon's birthday. The worldwide words to the national anthem flash intentionally on the Dr. Pepper/Avis scoreboard which hangs above the center of the red, white and blue court where the Nets and the Stars, now standing, have been working out with all the red, white and blue ABA balls. The scale of the players from courtside is about as astounding as the lines of the legs of Moses Malone, Utah's 19-year-old forward who skipped college, making history, for pro ball. Malone totals 18 points and 21 rebounds, Wali Jones wears his necklace and Go-go Govan brings his family cheering section from New Jersey. But the Utah Stars lose probably because the Coliseum chooses to play "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree," "You Oughtta Be in Pictures," "Put on a Happy Face," "Winter Wonderland" and "White Christmas" during time-outs and half-time. They lose even though, on the floor, Malone embraces Kenon, Govan caresses Erving who makes a pass between Malone's legs, even though all you can hear from the crowd is "I'm in love with Moses Malone." Who is wearing two different socks. When Malone sits down after 39 minutes of play, he puts his skinny arm on the blue press table and watches us staring at the scars of his right elbow injuries. The Nets win the game by 15 points.



Oscar Robertson tells us if it weren't for basketball he'd probably be in jail. "Economics calls this... When you're poor you don't have anything to do." He was the first black player at Cincinnati in 1960. His great great grandfather, an ex-slave, lived to be 115 years old in Bellsburg, Virginia. His mother raised him, she was a beautician, and his father was a meat-packer and a "publishing figure."

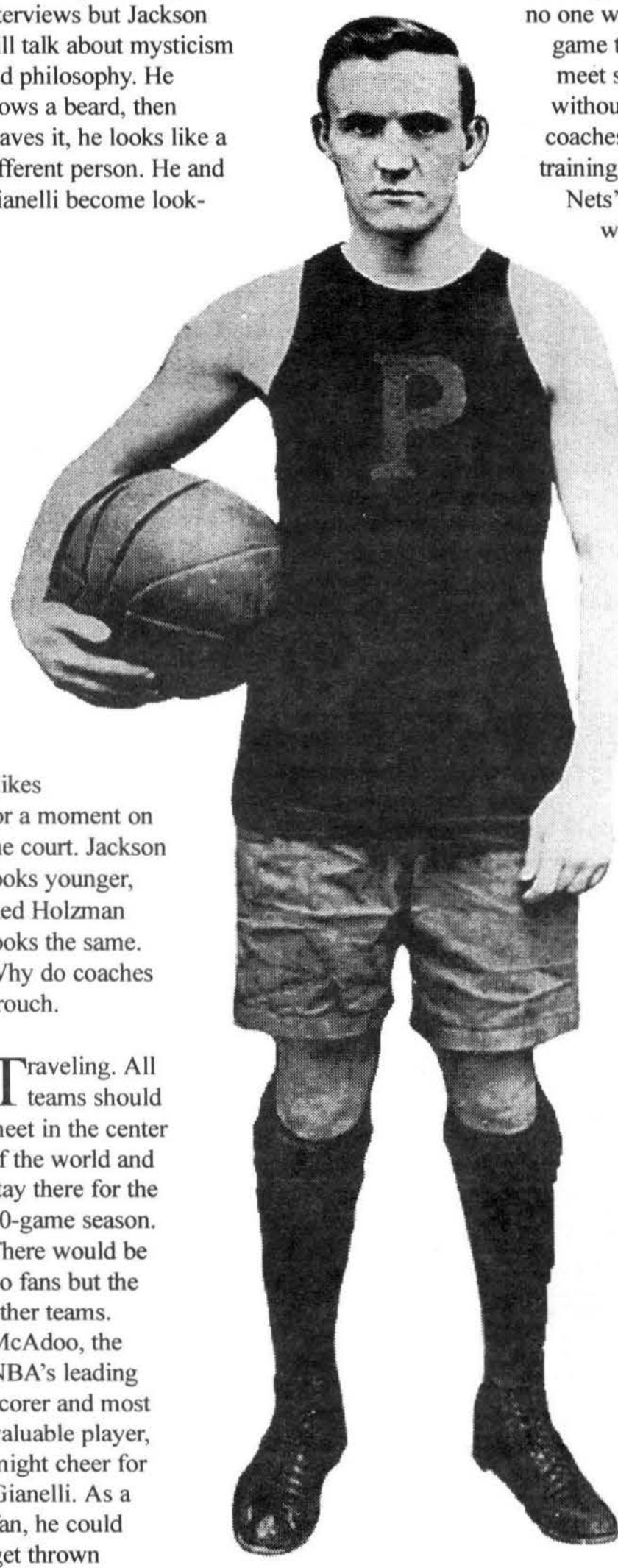
"I have a lot of stories but I can't tell them."

The 6'5" figure we were looking at, with an amazing stance even in his chair and the direct unassuming eyes, feels manipulated by the sports bureaucracy—"They don't take chances on black athletes." He has the persistent fear of being shut up in closed places (Fred Hampton's was an "out and out murder") and recurrent dreams of being buried and of being chased by wild animals. The Bulls and the Bucks? Oscar didn't believe that you dream every night until we told him it had been scientifically proven. We spent a lot of time talking then about rapid eye movement (off the court). It'd be interesting to put Oscar Robertson into a dream laboratory. He never crossed his legs.

Married with three daughters—he's "got a basketball player"—Oscar thinks the girls can easily outrun the boys but he doesn't like his wife to pick his clothes, which were understated from what we're used to from the "Best Pro Guards." His prediction for that award is Jim Price, Milwaukee Bucks. Did Jim Price ever chase him in a dream? Probably not, but an easy-going Oscar Robertson, sometimes accused of being lazy, has a '72 Jaguar, which is his only clear obsession—he treats it with care and when he tried to outrun the cops in it, his name is on his driver's license. Lazy on the court? You can't be helter-skelter and then pick up speed, he says, it's just what you learn. What does your basketball do to your peripheral vision? "It's good in a crowd on Wisconsin Street." Where have you been? "To Tanzania, Mali and Kenya with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, to Spain with Dave DeBusschere, to Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia." Do you oil your body? "Not with Mazola."

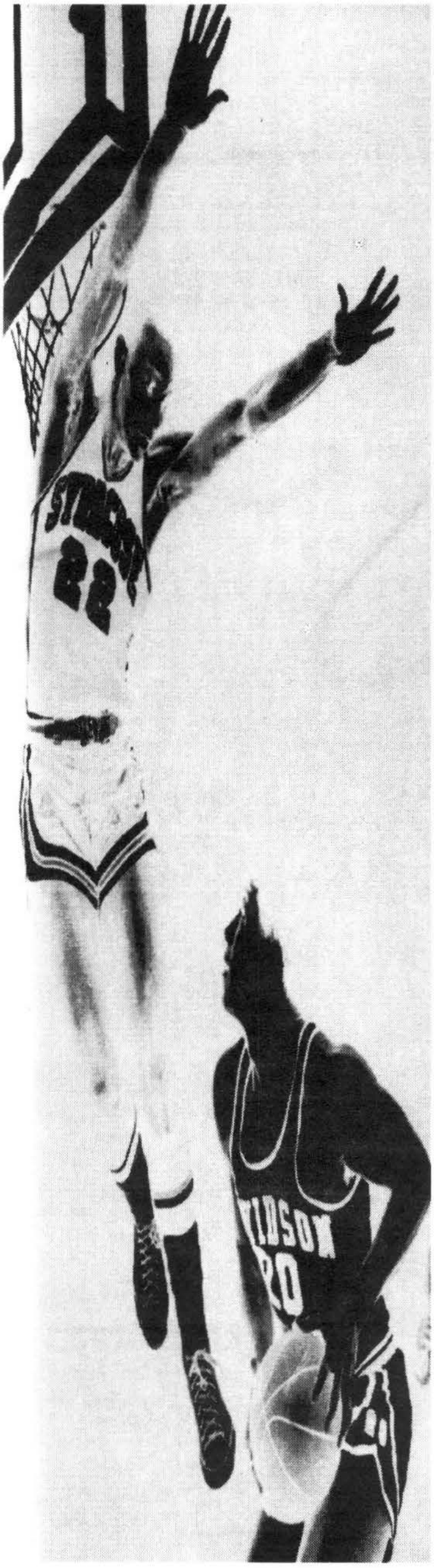
We were sitting in our hotel suite at the Plankinton House in Milwaukee drinking tequila sunrises with the "Big O" for three hours in November. Oscar looked happy when we brought up the Knicks. "They're getting what they deserve." And it must've been the Knicks we were talking about when he said, "You can't go into the lake and build an island unless there's a mountain there to start with." Maybe the mountain wasn't Jabbar.

We sit down to watch a few Knicks games. If one sat down with Dave DeBusschere, one might have a margarita. Margaritas, tequila sunrises, somebody tells us Wendell Ladner likes to fuck. Frazier's "Sometimes I get an offer I can't refuse" occurs to us. Jim Wergeles, the Knicks publicity manager, tells us Bill Bradley won't give interviews this year. Frazier's publicity is awful. Bill Walton announces they're trying to discredit him, he doesn't fit in. The *FBI is looking for the people who shared* his house. They question Walton about Patty Hearst. The Knicks steal Eddie Donovan from the Buffalo Braves. 20,000 people come to watch an NBA game. In the cheaper seats in the Garden, nobody cares if you stand up for the national anthem. It's not like baseball. We always say we're pregnant if anybody hassles us. If they play the national anthem before every game because the sport is a national sport, then how can the champions be world champions? What does Bill Walton think when he listens to the bombs bursting in air? After all, he's been arrested in a peace demonstration. Could a player be arrested for reading Shakespeare. Jim Bouton said everybody thought he was queer for reading any books at all. You feel like you know the Knicks personally. It's the publicity, or maybe age. Your age, our age. So Bradley won't give interviews but Jackson will talk about mysticism and philosophy. He grows a beard, then shaves it, he looks like a different person. He and Gianelli become look-alikes for a moment on the court. Jackson looks younger, Red Holzman looks the same. Why do coaches crouch.



Traveling. All teams should meet in the center of the world and stay there for the 80-game season. There would be no fans but the other teams. McAdoo, the NBA's leading scorer and most valuable player, might cheer for Gianelli. As a fan, he could get thrown out of the game for two technicals, or for trying to play center for the Knicks. There would be no two million dollar deals for Walton because the fans would all be professionals and they'd get in free. Too bad then, there'd be no women at the games, except as invited guests. And the wives and families of the players. All of Walt Frazier's girlfriends could attend. But no one would know this. After the game the professionals would meet secretly to exchange plays without the knowledge of the coaches. Jabbar would spend time training Marvin Webster to be the Nets' new center. The season would last two months after which the players would emerge from the center of the world, change their identities and not have to be healthy, competitive citizens. Then they would travel to all parts of the world for free with a special basketball identification card. Some would become astronauts. Some would join the Communist Party.

Somebody says to us, "There are too many basketball players." Then somebody says, "There are too many poets." We imagine a great conference of poets with trainers, doctors and coaches, keeping them in fine physical and mental shape. We wonder what their work would be like. Attendance, 20,239. The poets perform in gym suits, showing their long lean legs and muscular shoulders. The older poets comment on the game or go into business. One poet is the center, there are two forwards and two guards, but anyone can score. The center, generally, must simply try to get the words away from the opposing team of poets



and the guards must bring them downcourt to be used. The referees can be cursed at during and after the game. Some poets are booed for using the language awkwardly, others cheered for coming up with a new style of play. Most of the coaches are former players who continue to read and write books. A foul is called on any poet who deliberately deranges the language. A poet in a state of ecstasy makes a 3-point play. Fouled in the act of writing by personal insults, the poet would go to the line.

From a distance the Nassau Coliseum looks like Godard's "Alphaville," an end-of-the-world city on another planet where people say yes when they mean no and no when they mean yes. The crowd at the Coliseum is a McDonald's crowd like the crowd in Kentucky would be a fried-chicken crowd—we watch the crowds on TV. For people who rarely leave Manhattan except for the jungles of South America, it's strange to see the reactions of the Nassau crowd detonated by a mid-court scoreboard which flashes "Defense" and "Kenon Lean In," and only genuinely set off by the shouting of the players' friends. The hard-core New Yorkers you find in Madison Square Garden don't drive out to the Coliseum to do their obscene schoolyard rooting for the home team. The Coliseum fans are predominantly white and demure. We get culture shock. We go down to the schoolyard on 6th Avenue and 4th Street in the middle of the Greenwich Village to watch a Rucker Tournament-style game. We look through the fence again at the black athletes whose style we're more familiar with. We set up a game with some poets we know. Two women, two men. Everybody approves of women's ball up to a point—the breasts. The man-woman team wins and the next people we have to play for the court, two more men, refuse to play with a woman. We get mad and throw a long lob pass over one tall man into the groin of the other tall man and walk off the court. We spit. Then we insist on playing off the refusing team and win the court. And the women place in the schoolyard. The weird thing is that every time we go inside for an easy lay-up, the men clear the way, arms down and let you score. And if you guard your man closely, he'll get spooked, even with a tremendous height advantage, especially if he's been your former lover. And if you have an outside shot, nobody expects it. As women in the schoolyards of New York, we forget about our breasts, but the men don't yet and they're impressed by our Converse All-Stars and the only thing we need is a longer stride and more penetration. And if, like playing poker, you keep asking what the rules are, you can bluff a stranger into thinking you can't take a shot at all. Under the boards is where they forget you're a lady. When we were 15 we were thrown out of the schoolyards by the "boys." Now (and then) we're Frazier's age, we're Monroe's age and we can play with our "colleagues," sometimes with our students, still win the court from the high school kids and have a real game. If you run into a player on your own team (male) in one of these games, where the match-ups are usually made first by size and then by surprise, he'll usually take you up by the shoulders in a sportsman-like gesture which reminds us of the coaches patting their pro players on the ass. Before spring we can go down to Pace College to practice indoors, but the New York Athletic Club is the ultimate hold-out—no women, no Jews, no nothing but ultimate Catholics. A friend of ours named Friedman went down there as a guest and had to sign in as Kelly. Also required is a jacket and tie. Now we could easily put on a jacket and tie—it's been done before—and go take a sauna. A friend of ours named Greenberg went down and signed in as Adams and went into the sauna with toenails painted blue.

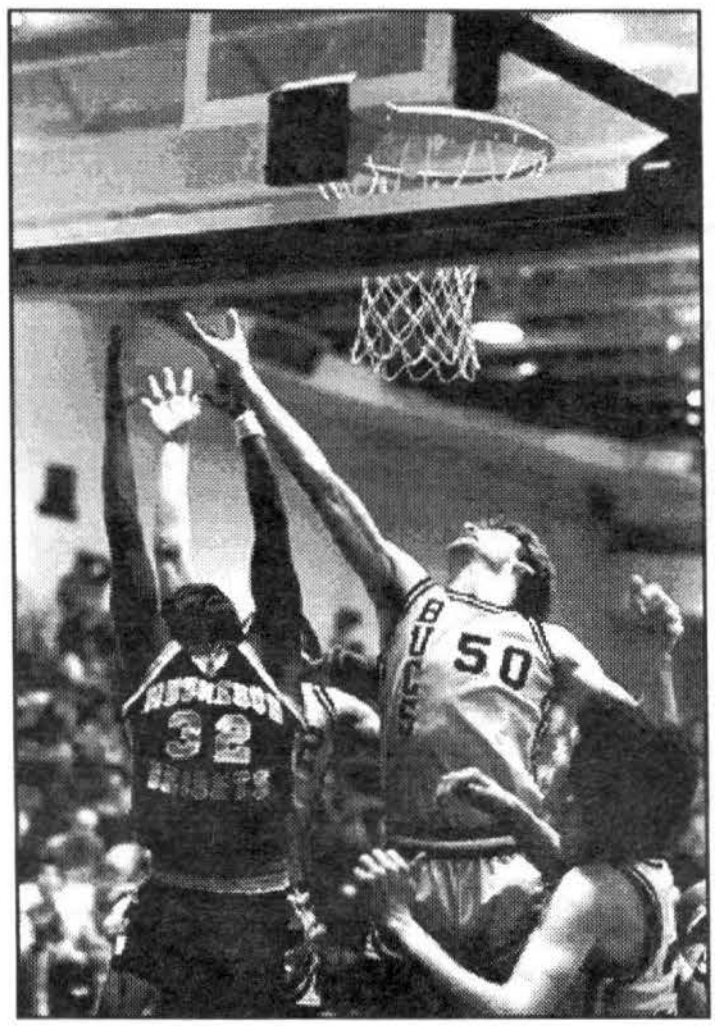
Basketball was not invented in 1891 by Dr. James A. Naismith of Springfield, Massachusetts. A form of it was played by the Aztecs who had an advanced civilization before the great white god of Cortez arrived in 1519. The Aztec priests controlled the calendar by keeping their knowledge of the stars and their movements secret so that the people did not know their predictions were based on science and the priests could stay in power. Now the great white gods of basketball are finally relenting—we remember when in the betting on college games great white people feared the blacks were taking over—and there are great black coaches finally in the game and the great white managers who never "took

chances" on the great black athletes, have to and they can pat them on the ass the way Charley Finley embraced Reggie Jackson when the A's won the World Series, and Jackson, seeming to take great joy in it, poured a bottle of champagne on the head of the bourgeois entrepreneur who got a kick out of inviting presidents and generals to throw out the ball in the first game of the series. They all declined because they hadn't paid their income tax.

We envision an age where we can watch and indulge in the beauty and awareness of a scene, an Aztec scene, a display of concentration and an exhibition of the bodies of men and women moving. We watch their arms and legs, we watch the control of the muscles of those limbs, we watch it for free, we see an art, we do not have to be Americans and salute this art. Whatever is brutish becomes sublime, whatever is strength becomes defined as strength in a pure display of the talent, as DeBusschere said to us, that is everybody's talent in their own right. We watch the beautiful bodies of men moving up and down the court, we get turned on by them, moving. We watch them sit down and stretch out legs that could be embracing us, in love. But we watch their talent, it makes us feel ours. We are mesmerized by the sight of bodies. A culture Western culture is not aware of. There is grace in the men and women who play. A hedonism that turns into a sort of mysticism. Too bad pro ball takes them right out of school into another institution. You can't be institutionalized again and again without a break, being alone, to understand, in America, that you don't go into business, that you aren't a star, that you must spend time confronting the person without color, with a talent, the self whose eyes in the mirror begin to fade as the eyes of two people do fade, one into the other, in love. In an American institution there is no pleasure admitted except competition. We watch the men play and say what we want without fear of technicals. We watch them on TV and do what we want. We curse the referees and yell at the Celtics, "You have sticks up your asses." The men are tiny on TV and large in their seats and we watch them in their seats, shifting but still, with spread legs. A rookie in the Coliseum sits on the floor in front of us and says, "Do you make love?"

We think that the electro-galvanic stimulator that the Nets bought for Julius Erving's knees, described as "a mild electric chair." We remember our knowledge of everybody's injuries, how they are made public. We watch Wendell Ladner beat up on Issel and later go from downtown. We watch the players who seem desperate running up and down the court and the ones who do it like deer. We wonder, as any publicity would excite the reader to know, if the deer-like ones are the ones we would prefer. Why do we care about their persons, it's a game, Kevin Loughery's suits are beyond understanding, Dave DeBusschere's height when we stand next to him, becomes, as it does in fear or in fantasy, a whole stance requiring awe. Who is breeding these men, is it the women Oscar says educates them? Why can't a sacred and sacrilegious sport, where there is sex, allow a language reporting feeling. A feeling of provocation, maybe a feeling of winning or losing, for us an ambiguous feeling of competition provoked by size—the size of the men, the illusion of the size of their cocks, and really, the size of the muscles of the arms and legs of the men we see and sport with every day. We can easily be winners, provoked by this. All the blonde women in the audience. An

A friend of ours named Greenberg went down and signed in as Adams and went into the sauna with toenails painted blue.



American sport. A sport where lives can be changed but no scandals exchanged with the press. Except in secret, the secret managers, trying to keep it clean. What will Walt Frazier, our age, be doing at the turn of the century, in the 21st century? Still running a liquor store and a round bed? No way. Sometimes a player will let his shirt hang out of his pants and this seems an innovation. Sometimes a player will refuse to play and will fight the bureaucracy and turn down the money. This is one thing no one will talk about openly or in detail. Everybody approves of a clean life, clean playing and healthy rules. We would go crazy. We watch the ads for Eastern Airlines, Coca-Cola, First National City Bank, Schlitz or Schaeffer, we watch the ads for Lite Beer, we go crazy. We listen to Al Bianchi, coach of the Virginia Squires who've won 15 games this season, say, "I could take two girls from Immaculata and win 15 games." The two girls from Immaculata would be Scharff and Crawford. But what's really a problem is the rims in Denver. They're loose and low. You can tell when a rim is low when your shot is off.

Mr. Barney Kremenko, publicity manager for the New York Nets and our great father, has confessed that he would "do anything for us."

On Easter Sunday, we got stuck in a bar in Hempstead, waiting for the train to New York after watching the Nets whole-heartedly beat the San Antonio Spurs. Being older than most of the Nets, we were asked for proof to get a simple beer, the ladies' room turned out to be the men's room and the art and dominance of the winning team seemed to subside as we were taken for students with notebooks of the game for which we had a talent in our own right. We go from downtown to the outland seasons of the new league, wonder what will happen in their bright blue presence, keep nostalgia for the old league and put on a full court press in the schoolyards where everybody admits to making love. ■

Mail Order Music Clubs and the Battle for Your CD-Buying Soul

The scoop on BMG, Columbia House and those amazin' 12-for-1 buy-nothing-else deals

If you've ever read a consumer magazine or Sunday newspaper supplement, you've spotted those too-good-to-be-true offers from compact disc clubs. "12 CDs for the Price of 1!" they promise. "Nothing More to Buy—Ever!" To join, you pay only the price of shipping and handling for 8 or 10 or 12 CDs, about two bucks each. You then agree to purchase one additional CD, or six additional, or one additional at half price.

Anyone who knows of my fascination with grocery store coupons (Issue 6) won't be surprised that I'm forever joining and rejoining CD clubs. The two major players in the mail order music business are *Columbia House* (and its subsidiary, CDHQ) and BMG Music Service. Operating from Indiana, these two companies use a variety of strategies to earn hearty profits despite apparent deep discounting on the products they sell. It's a game, really, that pits consumers against marketers. If you learn a few simple rules you can play again and again and again....

The music-by-mail business was born on August 1, 1955, when the Columbia Record Club sent out 6,000 packets to record retailers announcing a new service it hoped would increase LP sales in rural areas. There were other mail-order clubs around, notably the Book of the Month Club, but it was only now that Americans were starting to bring home phonographs for the family room.

In its mailing, Columbia explained how its new club would work. Each retailer would receive a 20 percent commission on all sales to club members that he recruited. To reassure the store owners that the club wouldn't steal their over-the-counter business, Columbia stated that no record would be offered in its mail-order catalog until six months after its initial release (a policy that is also followed today to appease retailers, although the grace period has dropped to three months). *For its part, Columbia would fund an* advertising campaign to emphasize the joy of owning records and listening to music at home. The initial offer to members was buy four records, get one free.

The city of Terre Haute, Indiana, was chosen as the site of Columbia's distribution operations. Columbia's parent company, CBS, was already making LPs there, and Terre Haute's Midwestern location and train lines made it an ideal spot for mass shipping. As membership grew (during its first year, the club signed up 128,000 people), Columbia House added warehouses near each coast.

In 1988, Sony Corp. bought the CBS Records Division, including the lucrative Columbia House (it was grossing $500 million annually) and the accounts of its six million members. Of these, most were video or record club members; only about 100,000 were buying the newfangled compact discs. That would soon change.

Because Sony already owned the Digital Audio Disc Corporation plant in Terre Haute, it saw the purchase of Columbia House as a natural marriage. DADC today manufactures 90 percent of the CDs that Columbia House sells.

In 1991, the media giant Time Warner (in the form of its Warner Music Group) became a partner with Sony in Columbia House. Today the club has about eight million members (12 million if you count its video club and other divisions) and controls 60 percent of the club market. Its Indiana distribution operation employs 3,200 people and the last time someone counted was receiving six tons of mail weekly (it even has its own post office). The club also sends out about 350 million solitications and 70 million parcels annually, and has a $210 million postage bill. There are also clubs in Canada and Mexico.

Headquartered in nearby Indianapolis, rival BMG Music Service has grown rapidly during the past four years. The company was known as the RCA Music Service until 1986. That's when the German media conglomerate Bertelsmann AG bought RCA Records from General Electric and made it part of its New York-based Bertelsmann Music Group (hence the name BMG).

Headquartered in Munich, Bertelsmann is the third largest media company in the world behind Time Warner and Disney. Its music division, which includes the CD club, BMG Distribution, BMG Classics, RCA Records, Arista Records and Zoo Entertainment, earns upwards of $3 billion annually.

Between 1991 and 1995, BMG Music Service doubled the size of its membership to where it now rivals Columbia House at close to eight million, with annual sales estimated at $400 million. The company receives 800,000 pieces of mail and ships 900,000 packages and letters each day. Much of this growth was due to the efforts of marketing whiz Joan Stamler, formerly of Doubleday Book Club and Columbia House, who took BMG to the masses by placing advertisements in dozens of magazines and by flooding the mails with tens of millions of direct solicitations. She also had the BMG catalog revamped to include color and commentary.

BMG made its name with what are often seen as unbelievable offers: Choose 8 or 10 or 12 CDs free and then buy one at full or even half price and you're done. The best Columbia House could offer involved a commitment to buy six CDs at full price over three years. More recently Columbia House has responded with sporadic 12-for-1 offers to do battle with BMG. The company has also launched CDHQ, which goes head-to-head with BMG's introductory offers but has less selection than Columbia House.

Obviously, CD clubs make a lot more money off your membership if you stick around long enough to buy their overpriced CDs. People who join the club, take their introductory freebies, buy one disc and then quit are known disparagely in the business as "in and outters." (Columbia House faces less risk than BMG since its standard offer requires you to buy six CDs at full price.) When Joan Stamler joined BMG, one of her goals was to cut back on "in and

outters"; she boasted recently in a trade publication that she had trimmed the freeloaders to about 25 percent of all enrollments.

Insult me if you must, but give me my cheap music. Since the clubs set their own rules, they can't complain if some members work the system to get the best deal possible. BMG and Columbia House have all sorts of come-ons to entice you to buy more than the minimum requirement during your membership, the most effective of which are the "negative option" cards you must return when you receive a new catalog from the club every three weeks or so. If you neglect to check off a box on the card that reads "Please do not send the featured selection" and mail it back to the club promptly, you'll automatically receive the specified CD and an invoice. Both BMG and Columbia House now allow members to respond by e-mail rather than having to send the cards back, which is still a hassle but at least saves you the price of postage.

Mail order clubs love negative option because "human behavior is based on inertia," as one marketer has observed. The clubs count on people to be lazy or forgetful and not return the cards, just as they've done since the Book of the Month Club introduced "negative option" marketing in 1926. When you forget to send the card back on time and a CD arrives unexpectedly in the mail, you kick yourself but usually just pay up rather than returning it. That's exactly what the clubs hope will happen.

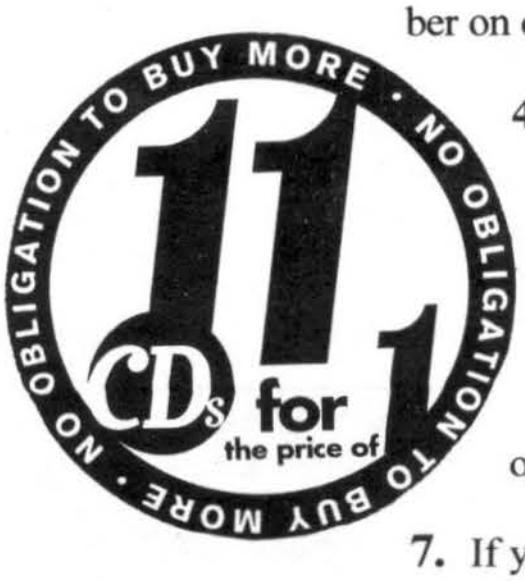
BMG and Columbia House also bank on the fact that many people, once they've purchased the required CDs at full price, will remain as members and order more. They'll make some money on you even if you don't take that route, of course, but not nearly as much. How? They tack $2.20 to $2.40 in shipping and handling to each disc (even the "free" ones). That alone pays most if not all of their costs, since both clubs pay little or no royalties on the discs they give away. They also have lower manufacturing costs, since they make their discs from masters

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

1. Don't buy any more than the minimum, no matter how enticing the "buy one, get one half price" offers become. If you have the patience, hold out on buying your full-price selection until they offer a 3-for-1 catalog special.

2. Don't get yourself on the shit list by not paying what you owe. This isn't about fraud. Many people have joined under different names, however, or by using their home and work address. The clubs don't seem to mind as long as the bills are paid.

3. If you join as "buy one at half price" option, consider purchasing a double album or box set that might not be available as a freebie. While Columbia House does not allow you to order multi-disk sets in your free introductory offer, BMG does. The order numbers for double-disc sets begin with the letter N. Put that number on one line and leave the next blank.



4. Never buy from the advertisements or the meager catalogs they send you; use online resources or customer service lines to get exactly what you want.

5. Never join under an offer that requires you to buy more than one CD.

6. When you join, phone or write asking that your name not be sold to other marketers. If you don't, expect a lot of junk mail.

7. If you remain a member of the clubs after fulfilling your requirements (i.e. you buy a CD), phone and ask to be placed on the "Order-Only" option. If the operator refuses, wait a day or two and try again. In the biz, this is known as changing from "negative option" to "positive option."

provided by the record companies. That's why you see the disclaimer "Manufactured Under License by BMG" notice where the UPC code usually is located. There's some controversy about this practice, as there's no guarantee the master supplied to the clubs is the same quality as the source used by the record company. If there is a slight difference in quality, it's hard to believe a casual listener would ever notice.

Finally, the mail order clubs make money selling your name, address and buying habits to other marketers. "I've been told there's enough direct access in the computer room to store the name of every individual who ever lived," a Columbia House executive told a reporter in 1993. Columbia House and BMG sell their membership rolls and even tailor specific lists such as a recent BMG offering of "The Alternative Music Select," with 298,000 names of people who have purchased recordings by artists such as Soundgarden, the Cranberries or Depeche Mode. You are what you buy. You can tell the clubs not to sell your name, but most people don't bother.

All this adds up to huge profits. Sales of mail order CDs and cassettes jumped 26 percent last year, to a total of $1.5 billion. That doesn't sit well with record store owners, who have seen their sales drop 17 percent since 1991 and who blame record clubs for creating the *impression that* $15 is a rip-off (imagine that). Despite their limited selection and the three-month grace period before offering newly released titles, the clubs continue to find new audiences, even among the 40 percent of American households that don't have CD players. In many cases the sweet deals offered by the clubs is the last *incentive a person needs to pluck down* $150 for a player. As they build their libraries from scratch, they become regular and enthusiastic customers.

Although retailers still control 85 percent of the music market, they've begun to fight back against the clubs' aggressive marketing. (Some record stores refuse to accept club CDs as trade-ins or sell them in second-hand bins.) The retailers have received support from some artists and labels who now refuse to license their products to clubs, mostly because of the lower royalties they earn on club sales. This includes new releases from labels like Geffen, MCA, Virgin and Disney and just about any albums by the Beatles, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, the Who or Pink Floyd. Hootie & the Blowfish have also joined the ranks, after nearly three million of 13 million copies of "Cracked Rear View" were sold through clubs. That meant half or no royalties on nearly a third of their sales. The group was were smarter the second time around: "Fairweather Johnson" will be withheld from the clubs for a year.

Retailers are unhappy with the clubs because they can't compete. A record store must purchase CDs that include full royalties, bringing wholesale prices to an average of $10.65 per disc. That leaves room for a $2 to $5 profit. The clubs, on the other hand, with their zero or half royalties and in-house production, have brought their costs down to about $4 per disc. Noting that, one Pasadena music chain offered $6 cash for any of 50 popular CDs purchased from record clubs because it was cheaper than buying them from a distributor. (BMG threatened to sue, but nothing came of it.)

In 1992, the National Association of Recording Merchandisers filed a lawsuit to force clubs to stop their freebie offers, and to eliminate deep discounting. To ease tensions, BMG last year launched a "new-artist development program" designed to entice its members into stores to sample artists who aren't offered yet by the clubs. For the price of shipping and handling, they provide sampler discs of two cuts from each of five bands. Included with the disc are $2 Blockbuster Music coupons. This didn't appease the retailers, apparently, as they were again talking about legal action in early 1996 to battle the clubs' "unfair trade practices."

All the carping back and forth may be over nothing. Two surveys have suggested that music clubs actually encourage retail sales. The first, conducted in 1991 for BMG, asked 2,000 adults about their CD buying habits. It found that over a six-month period, those surveyed who were club members bought an average of 11 CDs from retailers while non-members bought only nine. And one in five club members said they had bought at least one CD from a retailer that they first saw in a club advertisement. The survey also found that on average, club members increased their buying of CDs from retailers after joining a mail-order club.

The survey was obviously designed to bridge the gap between the clubs and retailers; predictably, BMG concluded that clubs encouraged people to buy more CDs, which helps everybody. Yet a similar survey of 1113 adults in 1995 by the National Association of Recording Merchandisers found that 74 percent of current club members said they purchased CDs from stores, compared to 69 percent of nonmembers and 80 percent of former members.

Whether you're building a collection or filling in holes, you should strive to find the best deal possible if you decide to join a CD club. First, read the fine print so you know what's expected of you, and what to expect (for instance, you can only get the best enrollment offers if you live in the continental U.S.). At the time this article was written, the best deal offered by BMG was 11 for the price of 1/2 or 12-for-1. With shipping and handling, this will cost you a total of about $50. For this you will receive 11 or 12 compact discs at an average cost of $3 to $4 each.

With Columbia House, you will see that many of their offerings are 10 or 12 up front for the price of shipping and handling on

THE BASICS

Columbia House Music Club
1400 North Fruitridge Ave.
Terre Haute, IN 47811-1130
phone: 800-457-0500
online catalog:
http://www.columbiahouse.com
e-mail: customer_service
@columbiahouse.com

BMG Music Service
P.O. Box 1958
Indianapolis, IN 46291-0010
phone: 317-692-9200
online catalog:
http://www.bmgmusicservice.com
e-mail: cs1@bmgdirect.com

each (about $15 total). You are then required to buy five or six additional discs at full price ($13 to $17 plus shipping and handling for each) within three years. Don't take them up on this generous offer, especially since it's less common now that Columbia House must compete with BMG. Instead, look in magazines such as Stereo Review and Rolling Stone or wait until around the Christmas holidays, when you'll find a Columbia House ads that offer a "buy one" offer (the best deal to date is 12-for-1).

When signing on with either club, don't feel obligated to choose from the discs listed in their advertisements. Each club carries upwards of 8,000 titles. There are two ways to get order numbers for the discs that you'd like. For Columbia House, call customer service (800-457-0500) and ask the operator to look up the numbers, or check the nearly complete catalog on the World Wide Web (http://www.columbiahouse.com), where you can search by title, artist or even song. BMG also has a customer service number (317-692-9200), although it's not toll-free. Their online Web catalog is available at http://www.bmgmusicservice.com.

For some insider dirt on maximizing your membership and full files of both catalogs, stop by Hirschhorn and Chow's unofficial CD Club Web Server maintained by two seasoned club members. It's located at http://www.hirschhorn.com/cdclubs/.

In most offers from BMG and Columbia House, you are allowed to choose half of your free discs up front, then the remainder after you fulfill your membership requirement. Usually the catalog you receive every three weeks will include sales to entice you to buy more than the one-disc minimum. For instance, they might offer a CD at half-price if you buy one at full price. If you have the patience, send back a few cards before you make your full-price purchase. You will notice that if you don't buy immediately, the clubs up the ante. At BMG, for instance, they'll eventually offer a buy-one-get-two-free offer. When they do, purchase your required full-price disc over the phone and order your remaining bonus and free discs at the same time. This will cut down on your shipping costs.

You'll notice that the clubs don't offer all the same titles. This has to do with their licensing agreements with labels and artists. As stated earlier, some artists aren't desperate or dumb enough to accept lower or no royalties for their work. Other conflicts arise because of the clubs' corporate ownership. Columbia House, for example, doesn't offer any music on the RCA label since RCA is owned by BMG. For the same reason, the BMG catalog doesn't include Sony artists such as Bruce Springsteen, Soul Asylum, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Luther Vandross, Billy Joel, Barbra Steisand or Mariah Carey.

If you ever forget to return the negative-option card and receive a CD you didn't order, the clubs are good about letting you return it and will even supply the postage if you phone first. You do have to send a short letter explaining the return, and too many returns might blemish your good standing and make it harder to rejoin. You should also make sure that you receive any CDs you order. In 1994, a Virginia postal carrier pleaded guilty to stealing nearly 5,800 CDs and 66 videotapes from Columbia House and BMG, which he sold to pawn shops.

Once you've fulfilled your membership requirements and received your free CDs, you should quit the club by writing "Please Cancel My Membership" on your negative-option card. You'll probably get another card before your cancellation takes effect; return it to avoid any bookkeeping snafus. And don't sign up your friends through the offers that both clubs will send you—it's not the best deal that either of you can get.

After you've waited a few weeks or months and feel the need for more cheap music, join again. Neither club seems to have strict rules about the practice of "in and outing" as long as you pay promptly and fulfill your membership requirements. After you quit but before you rejoin, the lovesick clubs will attempt to woo you with mail offers that are never as good as the ones you can find in magazines. Don't feel bad about throwing these offers away—to the clubs, you are nothing more than a name, address and checking account. ■

Chip's Joiner Pack

This random sampler of some of my favorite albums (with some kitsch thrown in for flavor) offers an example of how the selections of each club differs. (2) indicates a double album

	BMG	CH
AC/DC : Back In Black	105828	120337
Amos, Tori : Little Earthquakes	150382	436352
Berlin : Best Of 1979-88	101777	
Black Crowes : Southern Harmony		462192
Blues Traveler : Four	106046	102699
Bowie, David : Ziggy Stardust	110803	442509
Brady Bunch : Best Of the Bunch	101328	
Brown, James : 20 Greatest Hits	101342	
Bruce, Lenny : Originals Vol. 1	102271	
Cash, Johnny : American Recordings		477489
Charles, Ray : Best of Atlantic Years	105755	488858
Cheap Trick : Greatest Hits		428656
Chieftains : Long Black Veil	106408	137075
Clash : London Calling (2)		301200
Cliff, Jimmy : Harder They Come	102175	
Cocker, Joe : Mad Dogs (2)	235176	
Concrete Blonde : Mexican Moon	125533	468876
Cosby, Bill : Very Funny Fellow, Right		118570
Cranberries : No Need to Argue	106258	110478
Crow, Sheryl : Tuesday Night Music Club	103061	476531
Cure, The : Staring At The Sea (Singles)	150024	346858
Denver, John : Rocky Mountain High	102798	
Dylan, Bob : Blood on the Tracks		353094
Fleetwood Mac : Rumours	124025	286914
Frampton, Peter : Alive! (2)	235180	262311
Franklin, Aretha : Best of	120078	
Guns N' Roses : Use Your Illusion I		135469
Guy, Buddy : Feels Like Rain	101264	457234
Hayes, Isaac : Shaft!	106101	425116
Jackson 5 : 18 Greatest Hits	123865	327148
Jesus Christ Superstar (2)	274035	133561
Jimi Hendrix Experience : Are You Exp?	125457	
John, Elton : Madman Across the Water	103081	470989
Joplin, Janis : Pearl		433763
Journey : Journey's Greatest Hits		375279
Kennedy, Nigel : Vivaldi's Four Seasons	143419	414672
King, B.B. : Best Of B.B. King	123935	
Kiss : Alive! (2)	260253	423715
Led Zeppelin I	106355	487496
Lennon, John : Lennon Collection	173627	405308
Liberace : Best Of Liberace	204712	354522
Madonna : Like A Prayer	101029	379594
Marley, Bob : Legend	153521	337857
Martin, Steve : Wild And Crazy Guy	102239	
Meat Loaf : Bat Out of Hell		279133
Midnight Oil : Diesel and Dust		366153
Monk, Thelonious : Best Of	101187	108522
Monty Python : Best of	102195	
Morrison, Van : Astral Weeks	153574	364901
Mozart : Requiem	102571	140491
Nelson, Willie : Stardust		283887
New York Dolls : New York Dolls	102023	432864
Pearl Jam : Ten		428433
Petty, Tom : Wildflowers	106260	110155
Plant, Robert : Principle of Moments		320549
Presley, Elvis : Sun Sessions	272289	125617
Pretenders : Singles, The	133248	362541
Roxy Music : Avalon	101246	315721
Seal : Seal (1st album)	*161992*	*425827*
Sinatra, Frank : Stranger in the Night	102347	431114
Spinal Tap : Break Like the Wind	154301	
Springsteen, Bruce : Born to Run		257279
Steppenwolf : 16 Greatest Hits	113453	
Stewart, Rod : Every Picture Tells a Story	134694	423814
Taylor, Koko : Queen of the Blues		472449
U2 : Under A Blood Red Sky	153598	337667
Various Artists : Blue Guitar	134747	
Various Artists : Chicago Blues		378414
Violent Femmes : Violent Femmes	100147	468496
Zappa, Frank : Joe's Garage (2)	208805	130591

INTO THE LAND OF DOZE

Our Washington correspondent, Jeff Pruzan, stays awake long enough to explore the dullest Smithsonian exhibits

You've probably bumped into me in a museum somewhere; I'm the one walking *verrry* slowly in front of you, reading every caption as if I were on a scavenger hunt. I'm the one who blocks your view of paintings as I study the strokes for genius. And Washington, D.C., is my kind of town. From the National Gallery of Art to the National Zoo, you can't visit this city without bumping into a taxpayer-supported museum, especially in the tourist strip between the U.S. Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial known as the National Mall. Each day, thousands of people wander through the Smithsonian's dozen museums, soaking up Uncle Sam's photographs, films, artwork, gems, weapons, autos and ancient carvings.

Careful visitors can also examine some of the most *boring* exhibits ever assembled by man outside of a sixth-grade science fair. I set out one Saturday afternoon to search for the heart of dullness and capture my boredom in words.

AFTER THE REVOLUTION

My journey began at the Museum of American History. I realized that asking a *friendly Help Desk person* for directions to the most boring exhibit wouldn't win me any Lincoln pennies. But I tried anyway. The guide, a thin guy with glasses and a scruffy beard, smirked. "The official line is that there is none," he said, leaning forward in his chair to take me into his confidence. His voice fell. "Why don't you try 'After the Revolution?' Second floor. I'm not too crazy about that one."

"After the Revolution: Everyday Life in America, 1780-1800" was indeed a promising candidate. But after spending about 15 minutes looking around, I found it too humorous (inadvertently, no doubt) to consider it officially dull. The displays were quaint (one placard concluded a long, irrelevant description of the affluent Saunders family of Virginia thus: "In 1808, Henry Saunders murdered his wife. We do not know how or why...."), but I did learn about differences between the Springers of Delaware and the Seneca Nation of the Iroquois Confederacy. I was also impressed by "The African-American Family in Chesapeake." How the Smithsonian managed to pinpoint the first people to use the term "African-American," I do not know.

Disappointed that I had learned so much, I wandered upstairs to see if I could find something more dull.

CERAMICS

This exhibit snakes through much of the valuable real estate of the third floor. The area holds a potpourri of exhibits, some of which have little to do with American history: a display of Roman coins; a hall of European musical instruments; an enormous collection of foreign stamps.

But I was here to force myself awake with ceramics. Through room after room after room of weak lights and walls colored in soporific ice cream hues—coffee, mint, butterscotch—I got a large cupboardful of "German Porcelain," "French Porcelain," "English Porcelain" and "Copenhagen Porcelain." Through the maze of glass cases filled with cups, dishes, little figurines, pitchers, platters, and bowls, I found out that the Prunus Pattern was favored for plates in 18th Century Europe. I learned that Boettger's Stoneware was commercially successful in the first half of the 18th Century. Yeah, yeah.

At least I wasn't standing in anyone's way when I examined the bowls. Even on a rainy Saturday afternoon, the museums were busier than any time during the week. But I encountered hardly anyone willing to find out more about Yellow-Glazed English Earthenware beyond two elderly couples who spent a lot of time commenting on the delights of the patterns and shapes. I kept my distance.

A young couple entered the room. I asked them to identify the worst exhibit they'd seen. "This one," said the woman. "Do you know the way out?"

BIRDS, BIRDS, BIRDS

Entering the Natural History Museum is like casting yourself into a 1950s Time-Life Science filmstrip. Its dull colors compliment its contents: amphibians, insects, rocks. I remember visiting at the age of four and becoming almost hysterical here, watching footage of an exploding volcano with my dad and brother. Now I circled the stuffed elephant in the main hall reflectively before again approaching a Help Desk for suggestions.

The volunteer—a woman in her 50s—seemed intrigued when I asked to see the most boring natural history exhibit. But she claimed she couldn't think of any-place to send me except for one tiny display in the basement: "Birds of the District of Columbia Region." Bingo! It was a forgotten hall filled with stuffed

birds, most of them small, all of them dusty. Ducks, herons, storks—all gray-brown or brown-gray. Yet I wasn't convinced. Perhaps the staff had sent me here to throw me off the trail. I went back upstairs.

THE EARLIEST TRACES OF LIFE

The centerpiece of an exhibit in a room off the main hall was a dinosaur skeleton and a silly animated film illustrating the origin of earth. Through the advanced technology of crude animation, I learned that the earth apparently made strangely human-like sounds ("Ooooh! Gaaaa! Shhhh-shhhhh-shhhh") as it heated, cooled, sprouted underbrush, went through adolesence, and so on. The exhibit was called "Earliest Traces." Within it, fossils and plants are described in "The Oxygen Revolution: Light and Life Transform the Atmosphere." Later, in "Ancient Seas," I also saw "Reef Life, City Life" [!] and my favorite: "Extinction! The End of an Era."

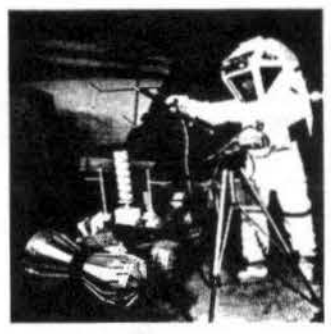
For all the spin, these exhibits all offered the same treats: glass cases filled with old rocks. It's a great place to take kids if you like hearing them whine.

ARTS AND INDUSTRIES

Directly across the Mall, the multi-colored brick home of the Arts and Industries Museum, completed in 1881, stores 19th Century junk from far-off realms like Russia, China and Michigan. I smelled boredom. Inside, I was greeted by an exhibit of gargantuan machines ("Machinary and Products for Industrial Use"), all first displayed at the Centennial Exhibition held in Philadelphia in 1876. As hard as I tried to see their inner beauty, none of the hunks of steel looked any different. "The New Otto Silent Engine—Working Without Boiler, Steam, Coal, Ashes, or Attendance," read one placard. "M. Martin, Wagon Builder, We Make the BUILDING OF STUDY BUILDINGS a Specialty," read another. My lids fluttered. After examining 30 displays, I had an interesting thought! If you turned on all these machines at one time, they would make a lot of noise.

The nearby National Portrait Gallery was also a potential boredom trap. Somehow, my high school history teacher never got around to Benjamin O'Fallon, Billy Bowlegs ("also known as Holata Micco"), Tenskwatawa the Prophet or David Wiley.

Even so, at least I could see what they looked like. Who but the Amish can keep their blood flowing in the world of "Auguste Edouart and the American Silhouette Tradition"? Of all the peculiar artsy trends that Americans have suffered through, the silhouette portrait must be the silliest. You've seen silhouettes—they're those corny black outlines of your head that you brought home for mom to stick on the fridge. The Smithsonian collects them.



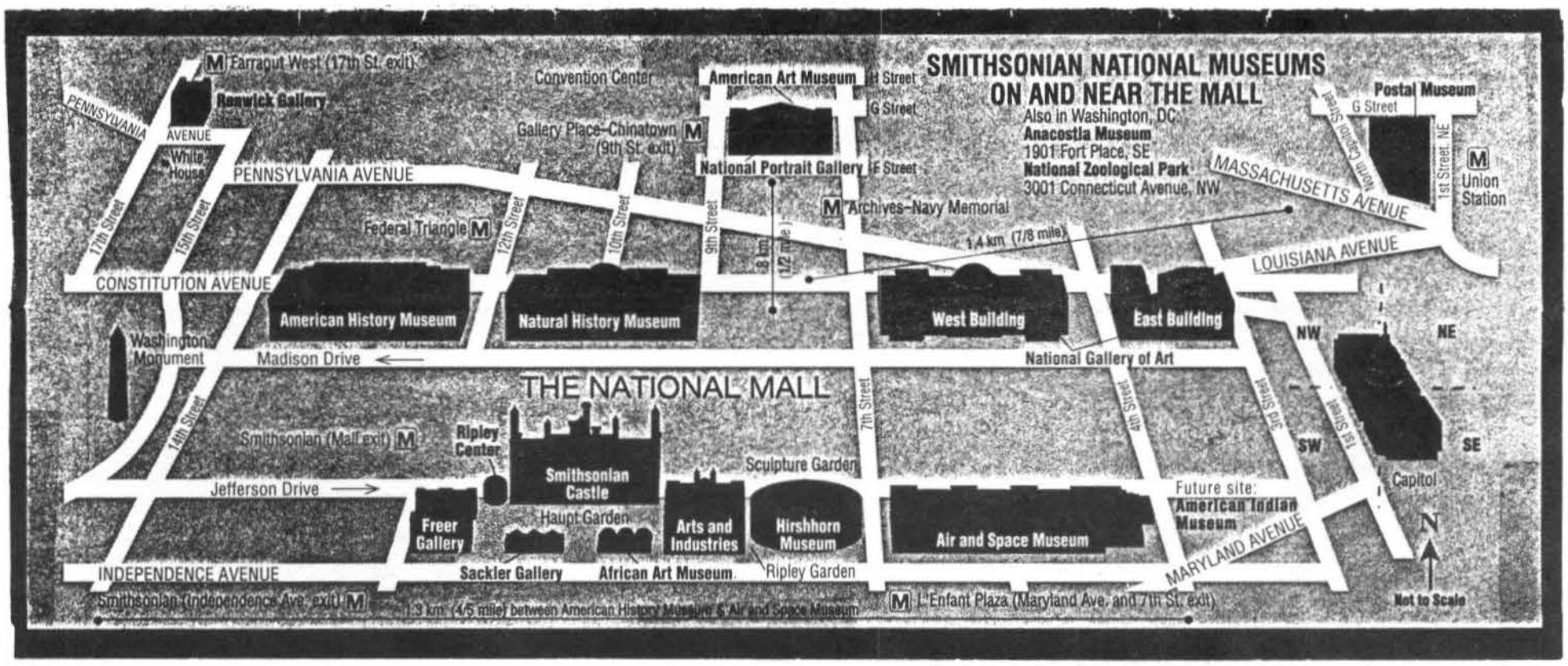
Blame Edouart, the French guy who popularized the format but overlooked a trifling detail: Silhouettes don't tell you anything beyond the shape of a person's head. Hence, standing in a room full of silhouettes leaves you with nothing to examine except the descriptions that accompany each picture. No windows to the soul here, no enigmatic smiles, no weary, baggy eyes. The most ridiculous example of this is a family portrait. While the mom, pop and siblings are black figures, other elements in the picture—furniture, windows—are drawn realistically. Why would an artist create only the outline of his human subjects, yet meticulously draw everything else in the room?

UP, UP AND AWAY

Let's get this out of the way: I hate the National Air and Space Museum. After a childhood of going there every time my family had out-of-town guests, I can verify that the exhibits change at a glacial pace. "Apollo to the Moon" is typical. Glass cases filled with spacesuits and cassette tapes, grids and scoops, bags and calipers—all designed to show what went into the brass tacks of gathering data on the moon (for crying out loud, I know what a cassette tape looks like). You also see the door—they call it a "hatch"—through which astronauts entered and exited the craft. There's also a nice arrangement of "Rocks and Soil" and a timeline depicting the stewardship of the various Administrators of NASA, from October 4, 1957 to January 25, 1984. The line runs out of wall-space at that point, two years shy of the Challenger explosion.

THAT'S IT

So there you have it. The most boring spots I could find. I hope you've made it this far, but if you haven't, don't worry. I barely did either. ■



Is Chip a Rat Fink...

or just a Shrewd Opportunist?

The Online Community Weighs In

One Friday night, as I washed clothes in the laundry room of my yuppie high rise, a woman slid into the seat next to me.

"Excuse me," she said. "Are those your clothes in the big washers back there?" She motioned toward two industrial-size washers. I shook my head, no.

We sat quietly for a moment, watching TV. The news was on.

"Would you do me a favor?" the woman said eventually. I shrugged. "I'm Mrs. Johnson, and I lease out a number of furnished apartments in this building for business clients who are in town for several weeks or months. I spent about $50,000 to have those washers put in to clean sheets and towels."

"Uh-huh," I said.

"Well, the only way you can use them is with a key. Yet somehow someone is using them without my permission, and they're putting in regular detergent, which could ruin them." She looked around, then drew closer and continued in a hushed tone. "I have to leave, but if you sit here and watch to see who comes down for the clothes, I'll give you three free nights in one of our suites. *Do your parents ever visit?* They could stay free."

"So all I'd have to do," I said, intrigued, "is sit here, wait for someone to come get the clothes, then describe the person to you?"

"That's it."

I looked at the floor. "Would you put that in writing?" I said. No one ever accused me of being a sucker.

She tore a page out of a free newspaper called Today's Chicago Woman and wrote her name and phone number on it. Then, along the bottom, she scribbled "3 free nights at Johnson Suites."

Mrs. Johnson thanked me and left. I sat down to wait. After an hour, my clothes dried and folded, I gave up. I was tired, and hell, my parents could stay free on my floor anytime. I went back up to my apartment.

Forty-five minutes later, after a hearty meal of the world's most perfect food,

I began to wonder if the culprit had returned for his or her clothes. I went back to the laundry room. The clothes were gone! I approached a chubby guy who was folding his socks. "Did you see who took the clothes out of those washers?" He didn't say a word, just turned on his heels and pointed at a woman standing nearby.

I approached her cautiously. She was wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans. "Maam," I said, feeling like a henchman. "Who are you?"

She looked puzzled. When I explained why I needed to know, she pulled out a small key and stammered, "I'm Joey's wife." Joey was a maintenance guy. "Mrs. Johnson knows I have the key. Joey does things for her all the time, and she lets us use her washers."

I apologized for frightening her, then we rode the elevator upstairs together. She got off at 3, I was headed to 13. As soon as she exited—and this, I know, may prejudice you as you decide if I'm a rat—I made a fist and said under my breath, "Three free nights!"

Mrs. Johnson, predictably, had not given Joey the key. She said she'd suspected him but that he had denied it on three occasions. "Any time you want those nights, you just let me know," Mrs. Johnson assured me.

I've gotten mixed feedback when I tell this story. Was I rat fink or a shrewd opportunist? I decided to put the matter to a vote by posting my story on the Internet and seeing what sort of response people had. After several months, I had collected 115 votes for shrewd opportunist and 40 votes for rat fink. Here are some of the comments:

Rat Fink

"You have no right to inhibit the liberty of others. Who cares if someone was using that old bag's washer? You will most likely get your Speedo banana hammock caught in the intake mechanism of a jacuzzi and drown." **Seth Buddy**

"What you did was really American, and that's why I can't bear America." **Laszlo Meszaros, Sweden**

"You'll pay for your three free nights eventually." **Kelly Beamon**

"My mother usually stays in a motel when she visits." **Mark Messing**

"I am disgusted by you and your page. I would say I am ashamed to know you—but I don't. By the way, did you use the three nights yet? I am available." **Gracemary Ansink**

"A detergent that ruins washers? Be careful when you're in the market for bridges." **Joe Biggs**

"Sorry Chipster, you blew this one." **Kevin Johnson**

"At any time did it enter your mind to sell your three free nights to someone (e.g. your parents) for a tidy little profit?" **David Winkler**

"I must say, I would have probably done the same thing in the heat of the moment. What I realize now is that I'm a rat fink *and* a yuppie. I think I'm gonna cry." **Joe Crew**

"Mrs. Johnson obviously needed to distribute her guilt load." **Bernadette Kidd**

"Neighbors don't rat on one another unless the neighbors are worse than the cops." **Bruce Madison**

"You should never tell on anyone! They could turn around and tell on you and then you will be screwed!" **Heather Fitzpatrick**

"To be a rat fink is to do for money what you wouldn't do for free." **Fred Cooper**

"Since you returned after dinner solely for the purpose of finding the culprit, you moved beyond the realm of opportunism." **Mike Corbera**

"A creative individual will search for the win-win. The only thing you're guilty of is being somewhat less than creative." **Lisa Minks**

"I remember you from elementary school. You told on the other kids. The teacher liked you. The rest of us thought you ate boogers. If that's not you, you're a rat fink." **John Huffman**

"You should have blackmailed Joey and had your way with his wife." **Biff**

Shrewd Opportunist

"Bless your black little heart. What a sweet child to do such a thing for your mommy and daddy." **Wendie Dunn**

"You have an obligation to society to circumvent wrongdoing." **M. Martin**

"You'd have never caught me." **Craig Howell**

"You were just doing your civic duty. I expect you'll be announcing your presidential candidacy soon." **Katherine Fink**

"You agreed to do someone else's dirty work for material gain, which actually makes you worse than the sort of tattletale who works from a fierce sense of morality, though better than the 'nyah nyah, you're in trouble' tattletale." **Maribeth Bruno**

"There is no free wash." **Lloyd**

"Joey's wife would have done the same to you, and probably for a whole lot less." **Bill**

"We need more people like you! This world would be a nicer place if people were not afraid to help others." **Colleen Walsh**

"All this rat fink business is a load of crap. You made the best of a slow night." **Kevin Reilly**

"Do any of those suites have a jacuzzi?" **Melissa Rosen**

"Honest people should do all they can to foil the dishonest." **Robert Whitaker**

"You don't strike me as being young enough to be a yuppie." **Sean Hussey**

"Ease up with the guilty conscience already." **Larry Gilbert**

"Honey, that you would even question your pretty little brain over this one makes me shake my head in wonderment. What is this world coming to? A bunch of youngsters with high standards and ethics? Heavens! Never turn your back lightly on Free." **DLight**

There is no free wash. – Lloyd

"Trying to play policeman and confiscate the key would have been a bad idea as you had no warrant." **Tom Turcich**

"Chip, you are cool and I think you deserved those free nights." **Carlotta**

"Let her wash in normal washers like everybody else." **Melissa Vazquez**

"I just call 'em as I see 'em." **Bruce Giese**

"As a lawyer I am well aware how much of life is negotiable. You made an above-board deal and kept your side of the bargain. If keeping one's word is tantamount to being a rat, a lot of assumptions that underlie our society are up for reconsideration. Think of what this would do to the Boy Scouts." **Lady Kathy, Ladies Fetish & Taboo Society**

"It was right to tell since she was doing something wrong, but who knows, she might have given you a better deal to not tell on her." **Stacy Lorrane**

"If they weren't your friends and you told on them, then you're not a rat fink." **J. Murphy**

"You may be a rat fink, but Joey and his wife were scammers. I see nothing wrong with scamming a scammer." **Stephanie du Plessis**

"Hey, it's America, man." **Max the Avenger**

"If you'd refused her reward you'd be a Good Samaritan instead of an opportunist, but that's all semantics." **Ron Smith**

"If I were you I'd tell the lady to shove her three free days." **Brandy Collins**

"Sounds to me like she hired you." **Rick Bruner**

"I would have done the same damn thing. Thus, you are an opportunist, mostly because I wouldn't want to call myself a rat fink." **Dyslexia Effluvia**

"If someone gets fired or evicted though, then you suck." **Steve Dube**

"Good job Chip! Pure capitalism at its best! Technically speaking, Joey was stealing from his employer. You'd inform an employer if an employee was stealing from the till, wouldn't you?" **Eric Marlow**

"You were just protecting capital investment. The fact that you can be bought for so little is a subject for further reflection." **Tony Greco**

"If Joey's wife hadn't been doing something dishonest, she wouldn't have had anything to worry about, now would she?" **Ron Gatlin**

"The only thing I see wrong is you should have asked for the key to the big washer yourself instead of three lousy nights." **Cathy McKenna**

"I say tough luck to Joey and his lying wife." **Patrick Springer**

"You followed through exactly with what the woman asked of you. You have no cause for concern over your morals—as long as Mrs. Johnson is telling the truth." **John Galt**

HOW TO CAST YOUR VOTE: Visit the "Is Chip a Rat Fink?" page on the World Wide Web, located at http://virtumall.com/zines/chip/fink.html, e-mail your vote and comments to chip@playboy.com, or write Chip's Closet Cleaner, P.O. Box 11967, Chicago 60611.

first "The Catalog From Hell," now....

THE PHONE BOOK FROM HELL

(actual listings)

Source: PhoneDisc PowerBook National Phone Book Directory

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DEATH, D M 1201 E ERVIN RD VAN WERT, OH 45891-2625 419-238-1760
DEATH, DONALD C UNDERHILL RD LOCUST VALLEY, NY 11560 516-671-2077
DEATH, DONELD E 5314 ALDEN RD SHAWNEE MISSION, KS 66216 913-268-9121
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DEATH, EDWARD T 311 BENTON LINTHICUM HEIGHTS, MD 21090 410-859-3243
DEATH, ERNEST M 100 ROL PARK MILLERSVILLE, MD 21108-1424 410-969-8181
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DEATH, HARRY L 3250 GURLEY AVE GADSDEN, AL 35903-4004 205-492-1691
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DEATH, SANDRA 7 PIERREPONT AVE POTSDAM, NY 13676-2045 315-265-6574
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DEATH, SUSAN M 4295 LANEWOOD LN N MINN, MN 55446 612-550-0556
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KILLER, HENRY 320 W ARAPAHO AVE WEATHERFORD, OK 73096 405-772-2191
KILLER, JOE 2606 E FAIR ST GARDEN CITY, KS 67846-3848 316-276-2603
LIDDY, GORDON TACOMA, WA 98402 206-475-8789
MANSON, CHARLES 211 RANDALL RD LEWISTON, ME 04240-1737 207-783-6248
MANSON, CHARLES 210 BALTIMORE PT PLEASANT BCH, NJ 08742 908-892-1661
MANSON, CHARLES 655 BAYOU IL DESTIN, FL 32541 904-837-9777
MANSON, CHARLES HIGHWAY 232 TRENTON, FL 32693 904-472-4063
MANSON, CHARLES DOGWOOD ESTATEST MURPHY, NC 28906 704-837-3902
MANSON, CHARLES RR 1 DALTON, MO 65246-9802 816-548-3350
MANSON, CHARLES 2202 W HOLLY AVE DUNCAN, OK 73533-2008 405-255-8264
MANSON, CHARLES 6188 S 37TH ST MILWAUKEE, WI 53221-4626 414-282-4848
MANSON, CHARLES 1938 HOYT AVE INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46203-1323 317-639-6119
MANSON, CHARLES 24 FARNHAM PL METAIRIE, LA 70005-4008 504-835-9889
MANSON, CHARLIE 805 19TH ST NE WASHINGTON, DC 20002-4077 202-388-0320
MCCARTHY, JOSEPH R RR 3 YORK, NE 68467-9428 402-362-2572
MCCARTHY, JOSEPH R 700 W RICE ST SIOUX FALLS, SD 57104-1454 605-336-8319
MCCARTHY, JOSEPH R 3616 N PINE GROVE CHICAGO, IL 60613 312-528-9126
MCCARTHY, JOSEPH R 860 HINMAN AVE EVANSTON, IL 60202-2371 708-869-2477
MCDONALD, RONALD 4859 FISHER HARBOR SPRINGS, MI 49740 616-526-2644
MCDONALD, RONALD 114 HEADQUARTERS CARLISLE, KY 40311 606-289-6222
MCDONALD, RONALD 7782 S WARREN RD WARREN, IN 46792-9212 219-375-2747
MCDONALD, RONALD 15632 INDIANAPOLIS YODER, IN 46798-9720 219-638-4879
MCDONALD, RONALD MAIN ST GRATIOT, WI 53541 608-922-6421
MCDONALD, RONALD 977 HURON CREST DR BAD AXE, MI 48413 517-269-6624
MCDONALD, RONALD 5769 SAGGIO RD DELTON, MI 49046 616-623-3885
MCDONALD, RONALD 1035 SOO BLVD RICE LAKE, WI 54868-2616 715-234-1817
MCDONALD, RONALD 3134 VARJO CT KEEGO HARBOR, MI 48320 810-681-4245
MCDONALD, RONALD 171 PINETREE DR GRANVILLE, OH 43023 614-587-2911
MCDONALD, RONALD 4895 NEWCASTLE GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49508 616-455-4337
MCDONALD, RONALD 129 PICKFORD, MI 49774 906-647-2733
MCDONALD, RONALD 312 POPLAR ST MANSFIELD, OH 44903-2124 419-524-0730
MCDONALD, RONALD 1278 RHODES LN NAPERVILLE, IL 60540 708-717-0536
MCDONALD, RONALD 6594 ORCHARD HILL RD ALPENA, MI 49707 517-379-2236
MCDONALD, RONALD LEAKESVILLE, MS 39451 601-394-2484
MCDONALD, RONALD 2920 BOEUF LUTHRN NEW HVEN, MO 63068 314-237-2267
MCDONALD, RONALD LONGVIEW DR ROLLA, MO 65401 314-355-2572
MCDONALD, RONALD 203 W WAYNE ST RANDOLPH, NE 68771 402-337-0227
MCDONALD, RONALD 414 E MAPLE ST CUSHING, *OK 74023-2624 918-225-7524*
MCDONALD, RONALD 2524 N STATE ST JACKSON, MS 39216-4500 601-982-0708
MCDONALD, RONALD 207 UNION ST W DETROIT LAKES, MN 56501 218-847-8506
MCDONALD, RONALD RR 2 BELOIT, KS 67420-9802 913-738-3706
MCDONALD, RONALD RT 2 WILMORE, KS 67155 316-738-3706
MCDONALD, RONALD 2929 HIGHWAY 316 GRAY, LA 70359-9408 504-868-1538
MCDONALD, RONALD 789 S VAUGHN ST BRUSLY, LA 70719-2449 504-749-9020
MCDONALD, RONALD RR 4 MAQUOKETA, IA 52060-9804 319-652-2014
MCDONALD, RONALD 11 WESTMEADE CHESTERFIELD, MO 63005 314-537-8711
MCDONALD, RONALD 14235 BEATTIES FD HNTERSVLLE, NC 28078 704-875-2272
MCDONALD, RONALD HC 64 GUIN, AL 35563 205-468-2538
MCDONALD, RONALD MCCORDS FERRY RD EASTOVER, SC 29044 803-353-9753
MCDONALD, RONALD 303 MTN RDGE GLEN BURNIE, MD 21061 410-766-8347
MCDONALD, RONALD HWY 127 S CROSSVILLE, TN 38555 615-788-6005

MCDONALD, RONALD CHATTOOGAVILLEL LYERLY, GA 30730 706-895-2722
MCDONALD, RONALD 250 HIGHWAY 203 SUMMERVILLE, SC 29483 803-875-5812
MCDONALD, RONALD 4074 RAINBOW LABELLE, FL 33935-5414 813-674-1917
MCDONALD, RONALD 2741 KETCHUM MEMPHIS, TN 38114-6335 901-744-4587
MCDONALD, RONALD WINCHESTER, VA 22601 703-662-8533
MCDONALD, RONALD 9109 BACK UP RD TAMPA, FL 33637-2501 813-985-6913
MCDONALD, RONALD 517 LYNNHURST MONTGOMERY, AL 36117 205-279-8898
MCDONALD, RONALD 109 MONTEITH CT COLUMBUS, GA 31903 706-687-7568
MCDONALD, RONALD 6601 WELLBORNE DR S MOBILE, AL 36695 205-666-3117
MCDONALD, RONALD 404 MUSTANG DR DOTHAN, AL 36301-3922 205-671-5608
MCDONALD, RONALD 20 SAINT PAULS, NC 28384 910-865-5181
MCDONALD, RONALD 2128 EGLE VALLEY KRNERSVLLE, NC 27284 910-996-2305
MCDONALD, RONALD 3835 WOODSIDE MACON, GA 31206-4333 912-781-8386
MCDONALD, RONALD RR 3 BISHOPVILLE, SC 29010-9803 803-428-6621
MCDONALD, RONALD RR 2 KINGSTREE, SC 29556-9802 803-382-3948
MURDERS, A V 4545 SUMMER ST BURLINGTON, IA 52601-8984 319-753-5516
MURDERS, ADDISON 830 AIRPORT RD MONTAGUE, CA 96064-9590 916-459-3039
MURDERS, ALBERT HALLETT, OK 74034 918-356-4331
MURDERS, ALVIN 771 CLRCRK, HOT SPR NATIONAL PA, AR 71913 501-767-6305
MURDERS, B 4721 48TH ST LUBBOCK, TX 79414-3503 806-795-7451
MURDERS, BERNICE 240 PROSPECT HT SPRGS NTL PA, AR 71901 501-624-1658
MURDERS, BOB 4718 80TH ST LUBBOCK, TX 79424-3210 806-793-3921
MURDERS, CARROL 3915 NW 21ST ST REDMOND, OR 97756-8511 503-548-8386
MURDERS, C A 11930 HIGHWAY 35 BENTON, AR 72015-8869 501-778-9096
MURDERS, CARL D 14209 BENITA ST HOUSTON, TX 77085-2200 713-723-8823
MURDERS, CHRIS 700 W RIDGEWAY WATERLOO, IA 50701-9715 319-266-8960
MURDERS, DANNY L 1160 W JACKSON BELVIDERE, IL 61008-3004 815-544-6926
MURDERS, D M 527 FRASIER ST HOUSTON, TX 77007-2704 713-880-0353
MURDERS, EDDY 4280 DRAKE WAY CARSON CITY, NV 89704-9751 702-849-2567
MURDERS, ERIC 600 POPLAR ST CLARKSVILLE, AR 72830-4300 501-754-4149
MURDERS, EVELYN 424 MCCONNELL MOUNTAIN PINE, AR 71956 501-767-4082
MURDERS, F 14218 STRATHMORE CLEVELAND, OH 44112-3256 216-268-4138
MURDERS, FARRELL 12517 ARP ST HOUSTON, TX 77085-2301 713-723-2395
MURDERS, G M 1550 SW 16TH ST REDMOND, OR 97756-3201 503-548-2383
MURDERS, GERALD 847 FOX PASS CTFF HT SPR NTL PA, AR 71901 501-624-1096
MURDERS, GLEN E 516 JASMINE ST CLUTE, TX 77531-2508 409-265-1298
MURDERS, H L 119 ALPINE ST HT SPR NTL PA, AR 71913-5227 501-624-7231
MURDERS, H S RR 2 DARDANELLE, AR 72834-9802 501-229-4504
MURDERS, HERMAN D OLD LOUISVILLE RD HARLEM, GA 30814 706-556-3366
MURDERS, J A PARKVIEW RD WINTERVILLE, GA 30683 706-742-7327
MURDERS, J W 4026 BELLE PARK DR HOUSTON, TX 77072-1303 713-495-0289
MURDERS, JACK 2570 SHEFFIELD FAYETTEVILLE, AR 72703-4332 501-444-9787
MURDERS, JAMES M PEARCY, AR 71964 501-767-2162
MURDERS, JEFF 607 MURDERS RD HT SPR NTL PA, AR 71909-9400 501-984-5358
MURDERS, JERRY JUNCTION CITY, AR 71749 318-986-4662
MURDERS, JERRY FM1428 MADISONVILLE, TX 77864 409-348-6311
MURDERS, JERRY 450 MURDERS RD HT SPR NTL PA, AR 71909 501-984-5335
MURDERS, JILL PLAINVIEW, AR 72857 501-272-4125
MURDERS, KATHE 4280 DRAKE WAY CARSON CITY, NV 89704-9751 702-849-2567
MURDERS, KATHY 4833 NW COYNER AVE REDMOND, OR 97756 503-923-5579
MURDERS, KAY L 498 WOODLAND AVE SEASIDE, OR 97138-4219 503-738-9275
MURDERS, KEITH M RT 4 RUSSELLVILLE, AR 72801 501-967-1806
MURDERS, KENNETH 1310 E 55TH PL TULSA, OK 74105 918-745-9161
MURDERS, KENNETH 216 S CONRAD ST BENTON, AR 72015-4130 501-778-1373
MURDERS, L UKIAH, CA 95482 707-462-3473
MURDERS, L D 205 DUKE TRL HOT SPRINGS NTL PA, AR 71913 501-767-9503
MURDERS, LANNIE 607 MURDERS HOT SPRINGS NTL PA, AR 71909 501-984-5358
MURDERS, LISA M 636 6TH ST MIAMI BEACH, FL 33139-8602 305-534-8229
MURDERS, M BEAVERTON, OR 97007 503-579-6460
MURDERS, MARSHALL PLEASANTON RD SAN ANTONIO, TX 78264 210-626-3531
MURDERS, OC 19801 STIRLING FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33332-1514 305-434-4932
MURDERS, OREN MOUNTAIN PINE, AR 71956 501-767-3277
MURDERS, PAT 3915 NW 21ST ST REDMOND, OR 97756-8511 503-548-8386
MURDERS, PAT K 12133 SW STEAMBOAT BEAVERTON, OR 97008 503-643-3540
MURDERS, R C 258 ALBRIGHT RD HOT SPR NTL PA, AR 71913-9339 501-525-8397
MURDERS, RACHEL 216 S CONRAD ST BENTON, AR 72015-4130 501-778-1373
MURDERS, RAY 607 MURDERS RD HOT SPR NTL PA, AR 71909-9400 501-984-5358
MURDERS, *RICHARD 113 BUTTRUM* RD ROYAL, AR 71968-9736 501-767-3254
MURDERS, RICHARD 6 FREEMAN RUSSELLVILLE, AR 72801 501-968-3826
MURDERS, ROBERT ALTUS, OK 73521 405-482-6223
MURDERS, ROBERT 4039 BURKBURNETT WCHITA FALLS, TX 76306 817-851-9620
MURDERS, ROBERT L RT KINGSLAND, AR 71652 501-357-8419
MURDERS, RONALD L 498 WOODLAND SEASIDE, OR 97138-4219 503-738-9275
MURDERS, ROY P 226 MURDERS RD HT SPR NATL PA, AR 71909 501-984-5888
MURDERS, STAN 4833 NW COYNER AVE REDMOND, OR 97756-9357 503-923-5579
MURDERS, TOM CASTROVILLE, TX 78009-0107 210-538-2028
MURDERS, WANDA S 516 JASMINE ST CLUTE, TX 77531-2508 409-265-1298
MURDERS, WAYNE 106 ANN BONNEY HOT SPR NTL PA, AR 71913 501-767-5048
MURDERS, WILBURN 2104 7TH ST HOT SPR NTL PA, AR 71913-5859 501-321-2132
MURDERS, WILLIAM C 244 ARNETT HOT SPR NTL PA, AR 71901 501-262-1431
MUSSOLINI, BEN 113 WASHINGTON NEW ROCHELLE, NY 10801 914-235-1924
MUSSOLINI, BENITO KIRKLAND, WA 98033 206-822-3388
MUSSOLINI, BENITO 368 -364TH AV SW FEDERAL WAY, WA 98023 206-661-2044
NIXON, RICHARD 260 W 2000 N MAPLETON, UT 84664-3501 801-489-8489
NIXON, RICHARD 6871 N 2200 W PARK CITY, UT 84060-8213 801-649-0875
NIXON, RICHARD 2604 N 32ND ST BOISE, ID 83703-5302 208-343-8283
NIXON, RICHARD 8411 58TH AVE E PUYALLUP, WA 98371-6473 206-848-2064
NIXON, RICHARD 1711 BELLEVUE AVE SEATTLE, WA 98122-2033 206-720-0869
NIXON, RICHARD 4858 VAN NUYS SHERMAN OAKS, CA 91403 818-501-0848
NIXON, RICHARD 31674 US HIGHWAY TONASKET, WA 98855-9202 509-486-1335
NIXON, RICHARD 5804 CHERRY LN NAMPA, ID 83687-8411 208-465-0301
NIXON, RICHARD 1928 MILLBROOK SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84106 801-467-8323
NIXON, RICHARD 6831 FOREST HAVEN LN MAGALIA, CA 95954 916-873-3486
NIXON, RICHARD VALLEJO, CA 94591 707-642-6649
NIXON, RICHARD 260 W 2000 N MAPLETON, UT 84664-3501 801-489-5995
NIXON, RICHARD YUMA, AZ 85367 520-342-0771
NIXON, RICHARD 24002 NE 120TH BATTLE GROUND, WA 98604 360-687-6887
NIXON, RICHARD RR 2 HARRISONVILLE, MO 64701-9802 816-884-6121
NIXON, RICHARD RR 2 KANSAS CITY, MO 64133-9804 816-380-6121
NIXON, RICHARD 1523 CRAWLEY CT CHANNELVIEW, TX 77530 713-452-7532
NIXON, RICHARD 406 J ST HAMBURG, IA 51640-1418 712-382-1291
NIXON, RICHARD 1400 JAKE LN COLUMBIA, MO 65203-0818 314-445-1551
NIXON, RICHARD 1119 LOIS ST KENNETT, MO 63857-1317 314-888-0165
NIXON, RICHARD 2107 COLLEGE AVE MIDLAND, TX 79701-6938 915-682-9275
NIXON, RICHARD RR 2 EUREKA, KS 67045-9802 316-583-5811
NIXON, RICHARD 320 BIENVILLE RD FOLSOM, LA 70437-5520 504-796-9513
NIXON, RICHARD 1102 TALBERT ARCADIA, LA 71001 318-263-8787
NIXON, RICHARD 2047 SW CTL PARK AVE TOPEKA, KS 66604 913-232-4049
NIXON, RICHARD 2512 ANGELIQUE ST SAINT JOSEPH, MO 64501 816-233-2016
NIXON, RICHARD 75 ROAD 2795 AZTEC, NM 87410-9733 505-334-9738
NIXON, RICHARD RR 1 BERNIE, MO 63822-9801 314-293-5993
NIXON, RICHARD 1201 WALNUT ST KANSAS CITY, MO 64106-2117 816-842-8600
NIXON, RICHARD DETROIT, MI 48234 313-893-1730
NIXON, RICHARD EAGLE RIVER, WI 54521-5455 715-479-9275
NIXON, RICHARD 22676 BEECH ST DEARBORN, MI 48124-2774 313-563-5248
NIXON, RICHARD 2501 BERRY CT WAUKEGAN, IL 60085-1508 708-244-2440
NIXON, RICHARD 461 KENNEY ST WHEELING, WV 26003-2453 304-232-3174
NIXON, RICHARD 1033 PAGE CT NAPERVILLE, IL 60540-4337 708-717-6007
NIXON, RICHARD RR 5 PORTLAND, IN 47371-9805 219-726-2462
NIXON, RICHARD 1013 TARA WAY LAWRENCEBURG, KY 40342 502-839-1094
NIXON, RICHARD 324 PARK DR NORTHBROOK, IL 60062-4813 708-272-6941
NIXON, RICHARD 304 N MAIN ST FORT BRANCH, IN 47648-1003 812-753-3646
NIXON, RICHARD 334 W SOUTH ST HASTINGS, MI 49058-2118 616-945-3804
NIXON, RICHARD 304 NORTHCREST DR MASON, OH 45040-1824 513-398-4480
NIXON, RICHARD 1696 WAKEFIELD TER LEXINGTON, KY 40505 606-299-1432
NIXON, RICHARD 353 WILMA AVE STEUBENVILLE, OH 43952-2351 614-264-9820
NIXON, RICHARD 6154 NEW VIENNA RD NEW VIENNA, OH 45159 513-987-2209
NIXON, RICHARD 1168 PROSPER DR TROY, MI 48098-2055 810-828-1639
NIXON, RICHARD 84 S MADISON RD LONDON, OH 43140-1445 614-852-0253
NIXON, RICHARD 1890 NELSON RD LANCASTER, OH 43130-1641 614-654-0865
NIXON, RICHARD 16411 STATE ROUTE 37 E CORNING, OH 43730 614-342-2830
NIXON, RICHARD 3305 STATE ROUTE 546 MANSFIELD, OH 44904 419-884-1552
NIXON, RICHARD 10295 MUCKLEY DR WAYNESBURG, OH 44688 216-866-2617
NIXON, RICHARD ROBINSON, PA 15949 412-676-5864
NIXON, RICHARD 14 HARBOR TER PERTH AMBOY, NJ 08861-4817 908-826-3437
NIXON, RICHARD 100 MERKEL RD GILBERTSVILLE, PA 19525-9578 610-367-6990
NIXON, RICHARD SNOW WOOD DR CAMPTON, NH 03223 603-726-7179
NIXON, RICHARD 353 ELM ST LAWRENCE, MA 01841-3649 508-688-1819
NIXON, RICHARD ROBINSON, PA 15949 412-676-4608
NIXON, RICHARD 41 BAYBERRY RD NARRAGANSETT, RI 02882 401-789-8682
NIXON, RICHARD 376 MELVIN AVE WEST HEMPSTEAD, NY 11552 516-536-9105
NIXON, RICHARD 1414 GOOSE CREEK LANE SOUTHOLD, NY 11971 516-765-5758
NIXON, RICHARD 2 RONEY LN WOLCOTT, NY 14590 315-594-2981
NIXON, RICHARD 61 CANDY APPLE LN N KINGSTOWN, RI 02852 401-295-7622
NIXON, RICHARD 108 SHANELLY DR PORT MATILDA, PA 16870 814-692-7242
NIXON, RICHARD 109 LEROY ST PITTSBURGH, PA 15239-1421 412-793-6531
NIXON, RICHARD 1112 4TH AVE SARALAND, AL 36571-3453 205-675-9194
NIXON, RICHARD 1112 4TH AVE SARALAND, AL 36571-3453 334-675-9194
NIXON, RICHARD 4960 NW 54TH ST POMPANO BEACH, FL 33073 305-426-2144
NIXON, RICHARD 255 BRITTANY PL WASHINGTON, NC 27889-9010 919-975-1141
NIXON, RICHARD 1695 GRAVES RD NORCROSS, GA 30093-1061 404-242-6275
NIXON, RICHARD 2916 PAGE ST ORLANDO, FL 32806-5140 407-894-6690
NIXON, RICHARD 122 W PINE BLUFF ST EDGEWATER, FL 32132 904-428-6337
NIXON, RICHARD RR 3 FOLKSTON, GA 31537-9802 912-496-2648
NIXON, RICHARD 75 LAKEVIEWPARK CLNL HEIGHTS, VA 23834 804-526-9324
NIXON, RICHARD 1151 VERMILLION CIR MARIETTA, GA 30060 404-432-4889
NIXON, RICHARD 8790 MARKET ST WILMINGTON, NC 28405-7974 910-686-4776
NIXON, RICHARD 8911 RACE TRACK RD BOWIE, MD 20715-3313 301-464-9140
NIXON, RICHARD 19681 SUMMERLIN RD FORT MYERS, FL 33908 813-466-8532
NIXON, RICHARD 1637 MAIN ST CARDIFF, MD 21024 410-452-5706
NIXON, RICHARD 2166 BRUCE PUGH FRANKLINVILLE, NC 27248 910-824-6943
NIXON, RICHARD 2012 BUCKSKIN DR CLAYTON, NC 27520-9046 919-553-5950
NIXON, RICHARD 1729 BOLINGBROKE HIGH POINT, NC 27265-2425 910-882-1387
NIXON, RICHARD 6910 HARDWOOD TRL GAINESVILLE, GA 30506 404-781-8668
NIXON, RICHARD 5714 LISLOY DR MOBILE, AL 36608-4040 205-343-5131
NIXON, RICHARD 1900 POST RD MELBOURNE, FL 32935-4764 407-255-9672
NIXON, RICHARD 1420 BUCKINGHAM AVE NORFOLK, VA 23508 804-423-3833
NIXON, RICHARD 358 EPPINGTON CIR HAMPTON, VA 23669-1726 804-851-4071
NIXON, RICHARD 358 EPPINGTON CIR HAMPTON, VA 23669-1726 804-851-9153
NIXON, RICHARD 114 S HANSON ST EASTON, MD 21601-2951 410-822-6953

NIXON, RICHARD 36 TOWNE SQUARE NEWPORT NEWS, VA 23607 804-380-8720
NIXON, RICHARD RR 1 STATE ROAD, NC 28676-9801 910-874-3843
NIXON, RICHARD 5309 TREECREST PKY DECATUR, GA 30035-3552 404-981-9126
NIXON, RICHARD M 154 WAXWOOD LN SAN ANTONIO, TX 78216 210-829-5247
NIXON, RICHARD M 140 S JAMESTOWN RD CORAOPOLIS, PA 15108 412-264-6746
PEROT, ROSS 6175 NW 153RD ST HIALEAH, FL 33014-2435 305-823-9908
PONZI, CHARLES 221 LEE AVE HORSEHEADS, NY 14845-1951 607-796-9183
PRESLEY, ELVIS HC 69 ATMORE, AL 36502-9805 205-368-9367
REAGAN, RONALD LOMA LINDA, CA 92354 909-796-5138
REAGAN, RONALD GEORGE WEST, TX 78022 512-449-2561
REAGAN, RONALD RR 1 PATTON, MO 63662-9801 314-866-0070
REAGAN, RONALD 3701 16TH AVE SW CEDAR RAPIDS, IA 52404 319-396-8595
REAGAN, RONALD FM139 CENTER, TX 75935-7597 409-598-4524
REAGAN, RONALD 714 KENNEDY ST PARAGOULD, AR 72450-5634 501-239-9187
REAGAN, RONALD 118 N LOUISIANA MANGUM, OK 73554-4413 405-782-5488
REAGAN, RONALD 17712 SANDY LN LEANDER, TX 78645-3134 512-267-4227
REAGAN, RONALD 130 ELMWOOD BLVD JACKSON, MO 63755-1731 314-243-4497
REAGAN, RONALD 2 FOXHILL CT JACKSONVILLE, AR 72076-2679 501-982-1030
REAGAN, RONALD 17015 DARRINGTON EL PASO, TX 79927-7351 915-852-3183
REAGAN, RONALD 810 HALL RD SEAGOVILLE, TX 75159-1734 214-287-5009
REAGAN, RONALD 20005 SUNSHINE DR LONG BEACH, MS 39560 601-863-3913
REAGAN, RONALD RR 1 CLAY CITY, IN 47841-9801 812-859-4693
REAGAN, RONALD RR 2 BLOOMFIELD, IN 47424-9802 812-659-3658
REAGAN, RONALD 5285 MORRISON LAKE RD SARANAC, MI 48881 616-642-9696
REAGAN, RONALD 1192 WALNUT LN NORTHBROOK, IL 60062-3528 708-272-0858
REAGAN, RONALD 2628 NEWBURG RD BELVIDERE, IL 61008-8528 815-544-8945
REAGAN, RONALD 5285 MORRISON LAKE RD SARANAC, MI 48881 616-642-9696
REAGAN, RONALD J 1192 WALNUT LN NORTHBROOK, IL 60062 708-272-0858
REAGAN, RONALD K 2628 NEWBURG RD BELVIDERE, IL 61008 815-544-8945
REAGAN, RONALD RR 1 ATHENS, PA 18810-9801 717-888-1649
REAGAN, RONALD 3 WALNUT DR LINCOLN UNIVERSITY, PA 19352 610-869-7167
REAGAN, RONALD 118 LAKE ST NORTHAMPTON, MA 01060-1321 413-584-6368
REAGAN, RONALD 1529 ADAMS AVE SCRANTON, PA 18509-2452 717-344-2825
REAGAN, RONALD 376 WINGATE PL YOUNGSTOWN, NY 14174 716-745-7277
REAGAN, RONALD 3304 LOST BRANCH RD SEVIERVILLE, TN 37862 615-453-6787
REAGAN, RONALD 455 WHEAT RD AIKEN, SC 29801-9173 803-649-3552
REAGAN, RONALD 282 N ILLINOIS AVE OAK RIDGE, TN 37830-4919 615-482-3135
REAGAN, RONALD 6838 COLTRANE MILL RANDLEMAN, NC 27317 910-674-5735
REAGAN, RONALD 303 AMHERST DR TULLAHOMA, TN 37388-5815 615-455-9000
REAGAN, RONALD 106 CARSON RD BROOKS, GA 30205-9704 404-719-7933
REAGAN, RONALD BLUE RUN DUNNELLON, FL 34431 904-489-8038
REAGAN, RONALD 6108 95TH STREE BRADENTON, FL 34202 813-758-8718
REAGAN, RONALD 756 EVEREST RD VENICE, FL 34293-5550 813-493-5953
REAGAN, RONALD 301 LOVE RD SEVIERVILLE, TN 37862-3127 615-453-4012
REAGAN, RONALD 140 COURT AVE SEVIERVILLE, TN 37862-3512 615-453-1372
RIPPER, JACK RR 1 BRONSON, KS 66716-9534 316-939-4730
RIPPER, JACK 601 E JUNE ST ALPINE, TX 79830-2113 915-837-5982
RIPPER, JACK 1781 E MULLETT LAKE INDIAN RIVER, MI 49749 616-238-7623
RIPPER, JACK 5610 SW GROVE ST PALM CITY, FL 34990-5107 407-220-1614
RIPPER, JACK D 431 NW 143RD ST MIAMI, FL 33168-4100 305-687-5989
RIPPER, JACK T 1525 EUCLID AVE MIAMI BEACH, FL 33139-3520 305-534-6573
SATAN, EDDY 398 NE BRASHER CT PORT SAINT LUCIE, FL 34983 407-878-9765
SATAN, J 3215 EDGEWOOD RD KENSINGTON, MD 20895-2905 301-942-4255
SATAN, NAUM 12405 BRAXFIELD CT ROCKVILLE, MD 20852-2032 301-984-0514
SATAN, TEX 751 DEBARR AVE NORMAN, OK 73069-4907 405-447-8779
SIMPSON, O J 515 SW 3RD ST ANDREWS, TX 79714-7007 915-523-5619
SIMPSON, O J US HIGHWAY60E SHELBYVILLE, KY 40065 502-633-6192
SIMPSON, O J 2719 RICHARD ST HOPKINSVILLE, KY 42240-1667 502-886-1186
SIMPSON, O J FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33324 305-423-8040
SIMPSON, O J 2260 UNIVERSITY BLVD N JACKSONVILLE, FL 32211 904-743-6354
SPECK, RICHARD 14218 NE 76TH AVE VANCOUVER, WA 98662-1040 360-574-3818
SPECK, RICHARD 5437 E PERSHING AVE SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85254 602-494-2002
SPECK, RICHARD 520 S 13TH ST LAS VEGAS, NV 89101-7239 702-382-2748
SPECK, RICHARD MARTINEZ, CA 94553 510-370-9736
SPECK, RICHARD 3984 S IVY WAY DENVER, CO 80237-1126 303-758-0767
SPECK, RICHARD 375 S OGDEN ST DENVER, CO 80209-2323 303-777-0052
SPECK, RICHARD GLENDORA, CA 91741 818-963-7865
SPECK, RICHARD 521 N GLENWOOD AVE GLENDORA, CA 91741 818-335-3625
SPECK, RICHARD 4035 BIG LAKE RD NE BEMIDJI, MN 56601-7051 218-751-3959
SPECK, RICHARD 609 S 21 ST DAKOTA CITY, NE 68731 402-987-3089
SPECK, RICHARD 15410 MILL BEND CT MAGNOLIA, TX 77355-1812 713-259-9503
SPECK, RICHARD 2518 CENTER ST SIOUX CITY, IA 51103-2137 712-258-4961
SPECK, RICHARD E FARNAM, NE 69029 308-569-2513
SPECK, RICHARD 7217 CLEARHAVEN DR DALLAS, TX 75248-3027 214-661-9867
SPECK, RICHARD 4410 BUNTING MEADOW DR KATY, TX 77449 713-856-9032
SPECK, RICHARD BEAVER ISLAND, MI 49782 616-448-2393
SPECK, RICHARD 182 W KREMER HOYING RD ST HENRY, OH 45883 419-678-4144
SPECK, RICHARD 3903 THEOTA AVE PARMA, OH 44134-1831 216-398-9015
SPECK, RICHARD 1103 VALLEY VIEW DR PLAINFIELD, IN 46168 317-839-6138
SPECK, RICHARD 764 E GILES RD MUSKEGON, MI 49445-2648 616-744-5618
SPECK, RICHARD 506 S DIRKSEN PKY SPRINGFIELD, IL 62703-2109 217-523-3683
SPECK, RICHARD RR 2 SHERMANS DALE, PA 17090-9802 717-582-8311
SPECK, RICHARD 1403 FREDRICK BLVD READING, PA 19605-1164 610-926-5321
SPECK, RICHARD 1237 TORRINGFORD ST TORRINGTON, CT 06790 203-489-4626
SPECK, RICHARD 218 TUDOR ST WATERBURY, CT 06704-2657 203-755-2182
SPECK, RICHARD 123 OLD YORK RD DILLSBURG, PA 17019-9350 717-432-2678
SPECK, RICHARD RR 1 REYNOLDSVILLE, PA 15851-9801 814-653-8499
SPECK, RICHARD 125 WILDEN DR EASTON, PA 18045-5624 610-253-1693
SPECK, RICHARD 1035 25TH ST SW VERO BEACH, FL 32962 407-569-2615
SPECK, RICHARD 6400 80TH AVE PINELLAS PARK, FL 34665-2133 813-541-2057
STERN, HOWARD 7 CAROLINE ST LATHAM, NY 12110-4629 518-782-0467
STERN, HOWARD 69 CRANSTON AVE SHELTON, CT 06484-5543 203-924-9475
STERN, HOWARD 798 EDGEWATER PK BRONX, NY 10461 718-518-9347
STERN, HOWARD 155 FISHER AVE EASTCHESTER, NY 10709-9998 914-779-4434
STERN, HOWARD 9 FRANKLIN DR SMITHTOWN, NY 11787-2024 516-361-2088
STERN, HOWARD 399 OCEAN AVE BROOKLYN, NY 11226-1703 718-462-3914
STERN, HOWARD 2940 OCEAN PKY BROOKLYN, NY 11235-8250 718-266-3936
STERN, HOWARD 11 SALISBURY LN WORCESTER, MA 01609-1428 508-792-1983
STERN, HOWARD 101 WESTERN AVE CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139-3757 617-864-1774
STERN, HOWARD 136 WHISPERING HILLS DR CHESTER, NY 10918 914-469-9426
STERN, HOWARD 1600 PARKER AVE FORT LEE, NJ 07024-7050 201-944-4980
STERN, HOWARD 219 MARGARITE RD MIDDLETOWN, CT 06457 203-344-8503
STERN, HOWARD MACK CENTRE DR PARAMUS, NJ 07652 201-262-9400
STERN, HOWARD 48 E 43RD ST NEW YORK, NY 10017-3807 212-682-0505
STERN, HOWARD 25 ROCKLEDGE AVE WHITE PLAINS, NY 10601 914-288-0023
STERN, HOWARD 525 NEPTUNE AVE BROOKLYN, NY 11224-4063 718-372-2315
STERN, HOWARD 1430 BROOKLYN, NY 11219 718-438-2464
STERN, HOWARD 2463 5TH ST EAST MEADOW, NY 11554-2637 516-731-8286
STERN, HOWARD 316 PROSPECT AVE HACKENSACK, NJ 07601 201-343-2073
STERN, HOWARD 2356 S DELSEA DR VINELAND, NJ 08360-7034 609-692-2856
STERN, HOWARD 6316 MERIDAN RD JAMESVILLE, NY 13078-9734 315-446-6653
STERN, HOWARD 50 PEMBROKE DR POUGHKEEPSIE, NY 12603 914-473-5280
STERN, HOWARD 13430 NORTHWEST FWY HOUSTON, TX 77040 713-869-6646
STERN, HOWARD 4206 SAINT IVES ST SUGAR LAND, TX 77479 713-980-7752
STERN, HOWARD 5328 INSTITUTE LN HOUSTON, TX 77005-1820 713-520-5656
STERN, HOWARD 3800 OAKWOOD RD LITTLE ROCK, AR 72205 501-663-2515
STERN, HOWARD 1543 LOCKE LN SUGAR LAND, TX 77478-3917 713-491-0808
STERN, HOWARD 2546 ROOSEVELT RD #-W IXONIA, WI 53036 414-474-7037
STERN, HOWARD 502 NFRANCES ST MADISON, WI 53703 608-256-6301
STERN, HOWARD 6608 N RICHMOND ST CHICAGO, IL 60645-4211 312-973-4001
STERN, HOWARD 75 PUBLIC SQ #-1400 CLEVELAND, OH 44113 216-771-1310
STERN, HOWARD 12925 SW 108TH AVE MIAMI, FL 33176-5450 305-251-3018
STERN, HOWARD 2824 NE 27TH ST FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33306 305-566-3648
STERN, HOWARD 11120 SW 88TH ST MIAMI, FL 33176-0941 305-274-3603
STERN, HOWARD 9333 SW 152ND ST MIAMI, FL 33157-1778 305-251-3434
STERN, HOWARD 2808 CLOVE LN EDGEWATER, MD 21037-1147 410-266-5587
STERN, HOWARD 5711 ALLENTOWN RD SUITLAND, MD 20746-4547 301-899-0660
STERN, HOWARD 10700 COASTAL HWY OCEAN CITY, MD 21842 410-524-2098
STERN, HOWARD 2673 NE 164TH ST MIAMI, FL 33160-4011 305-945-1161
STERN, HOWARD 3700 AIRPORT RD BOCA RATON, FL 33431-6422 407-394-6355
STERN, HOWARD 9220 FOREST HILL AVE RICHMOND, VA 23235 804-323-1099
STERN, HOWARD 9333 SW 152ND ST MIAMI, FL 33157-1778 305-251-3434
STERN, HOWARD CALABASAS, CA 91302-9136 818-591-8760
STERN, HOWARD 10023 45TH AVE NE SEATTLE, WA 98125-8119 206-522-1609
STERN, HOWARD 7559 43RD AVE NE SEATTLE, WA 98115-5107 206-525-0620
STERN, HOWARD 651 WINDSOR DR BENICIA, CA 94510-3748 707-746-7328
STERN, HOWARD 2800 NEILSON WAY SANTA MONICA, CA 90405 310-399-4585
STERN, HOWARD 3 OLD BREWERY RD TELLURIDE, CO 81435 970-728-3635
STERN, HOWARD 315 E ARBOR ST LONG BEACH, CA 90805-6816 310-422-2325
STERN, HOWARD SUNNYVALE, CA 94087-9501 408-738-8308
STERN, HOWARD SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94080 415-588-9977
TERRORST, FRANS SAN DIEGO, CA 92115 619-582-7780
TWEED, WILLIAM L 204 CHEVELLE DR CHATSWORTH, GA 30705 706-695-6513
TYSON, MIKE 802 N 2ND ST THOMAS, OK 73669-9004 405-661-2245
TYSON, MIKE 204 4TAVE #-W BELLE PLAINE, KS 67013 316-488-3379
TYSON, MIKE 3939 TEASLEY LN DENTON, TX 76205-8491 817-383-3252
TYSON, MIKE 213 LAUREL ST LAKE CHARLES, LA 70605-5523 318-478-6510
TYSON, MIKE 1200 N MAIN ST LAS CRUCES, NM 88001-1102 505-526-9520
TYSON, MIKE 6054 S TALMAN AVE CHICAGO, IL 60629-1522 312-471-1996
TYSON, MIKE 7000 SHENANDOAH DR FLORENCE, KY 41042-2585 606-371-6459
TYSON, MIKE RR 1 FARMVILLE, NC 27828-9801 919-753-4070
TYSON, MIKE RR 1 NORWOOD, NC 28128-9801 704-474-5515
TYSON, MIKE 7026 BRANDEMERE LN WINSTON SALEM, NC 27106 910-767-2481
TYSON, MIKE 244 S HILLSBOROUGH AVE ARCADIA, FL 33821-4327 813-993-1472
TYSON, MIKE 24 SANDPIPER PL JACKSON, TN 38305-1907 901-668-2706
TYSON, MIKE 521 3RD ST NEWPORT, TN 37821-3743 615-625-3465
WEIRD, CARRIE 100 LANDMARK CT SHEPHERDSVILLE, KY 40165 502-543-9591
WEIRD, CHERYL 7800 DOBSON LN LOUISVILLE, KY 40291-3624 502-239-7712
WEIRD, DAWN 10409 W MANSLICK RD FAIRDALE, KY 40118-9509 502-361-9808
WEIRD, DIANE A 208 PINECREST DR SHEPHERDSVILLE, KY 40165 502-955-7494
WEIRD, FRANK 1809 RAYMOND RD SHEPHERDSVILLE, KY 40165 502-543-3767
WEIRD, HAZEL 800 WEIRD RD WEST POINT, KY 40177 502-922-4914
WEIRD, KATHA R 4315 N STATE ROAD 9 ANDERSON, IN 46012-1019 317-643-8387
WEIRD, MARK 8106 TOLLS LN LOUISVILLE, KY 40214-5824 502-363-0836
WEIRD, O L 1951 LOVERS LN YULEE, FL 32097-7684 904-261-7311
WEIRD, ROBERT 2095 KNOB CREEK RD WEST POINT, KY 40177 502-922-4626
WEIRD, SHERRY 1809 RAYMOND RD SHEPHERDSVILLE, KY 40165 502-543-3767
WEIRD, T M 6403 FERN VALLEY WAY LOUISVILLE, KY 40219-2042 502-968-9317
WEIRD, THOMAS 7800 DOBSON LN LOUISVILLE, KY 40291-3624 502-239-7712
WEIRDO, JAMES 212 MEADOW CIR DUBLIN, PA 18917-2223 215-249-0568

Comments & Selections

Pee

I arise in New Orleans at noon, needing to cover 350 miles in seven hours to make the rehearsal dinner in Houston. The Nova has been stalling at red lights since Mobile. The gas station chap peeks under the hood and says carburetor trouble. We can fix it Monday. I decline and top off the tank, putting Houston within range on the fly. I piss twice, before and after gassing up.

Almost halfway, approaching Lafayette. It's not even 2:30. I roll cheerfully across the bayou. My only worry now is hitting Houston at rush hour. No fear. It is this fearlessness that offends the gods, dooming me. They fire neutrinos down from the sun. The engine sputters, lurches, dies. I coast off the highway, find a phone, learn of the GM center nearby. I call, talk to a young lady, praise her magical healing touch. Her name is Lou Anne and her voice is sweet and she knows I am weak with frustration. She vows to get me going if there's any possible way.

The problem isn't the carburetor, it's the fuel pump, and she jams a new one in there and I hug her, having loved her as only a man with a weak fuel pump can. Back on the road at five. Can't make Houston by seven, but if I crank I can by eight. Maybe I've beaten fate. But as I celebrate the engine sputters again and I accept the power of the gods and now the engine runs fine again.

Past Beaumont. The engine wheezes and coughs but keeps running. The gods have not made up their minds. They do not reveal to me the precise mechanical problem, but they place in my brain the certain knowledge that stopping, even slowing to an idle, means stalling and spending the night. There is nothing out here but weeds and cars going by. I cannot stop.

I must piss, right now. I have drunk the last of my jug of orange juice. Can I possibly stay in my lane if I pee into the jug? I murmur a brief prayer and unzip. I straighten right leg, raise ass, control accelerator only with ankle pivot. Whap hangs free with several inches clearance above seat. Jug fits into that clearance, under steering wheel. Right hand on wheel, left hand guiding whap. No vehicles ahead. A glance in the mirror. Nothing behind. I tuck whap one inch into the jug and begin to whiz.

Bliss. Piss flows freely for five, ten, fifteen seconds. Suddenly a gust of wind blows a chunk of retread into my lane. I swerve safely, but the single inch of tuck is not enough. Whap flies loose, a garden hose out of grasp; the geyser is in front of my face for a full second before I can shut off the valve. I've stayed on the road without losing speed, yet almost whizzed in my own face. The gods chuckle and high-five each other as pee drips from the ceiling and dash.

The engine chugs smoothly along all the way to Houston, but I arrive a humbler man.

—Jeff Balch

Poo

Ever notice that whenever you go into a library or bookstore, you have to shit? I always thought it was just me, but then I read an interview in the zine Office Supply Junkie with a woman who collects office supplies, and she brought it up.

Jeaneen: Buying a lot of office supplies kind of ties in with like, if you go to the library or sometimes a bookstore and you have to go to the bathroom. Tim and I have always talked about it, some of our friends have mentioned that too. Whenever they go into a place where things are organized and collected, especially a library, they have to go really bad.
OSJ: Often the same thing happens when I go to a thrift shop. And it's not a feeling like "I have to find a bathroom soon." It comes on real fast.
Jeaneen: Oh, yeah! Yeah!
OSJ: I used to think it's something with all the banks of fluorescent lights, that the electromagnetic field was affecting my bowels. But it may be tied to this urge for buying filing supplies, or books, and being in this environment of organization, of anality.

That sent me to the library to search through the works of Freud. After a quick trip to the restroom, I found this in "Civilization and Its Discontents":

> The most remarkable of these character traits in an individual is found in the anal eroticism of young human beings. Their original interest in the excretory function, its organs and products, is changed in the course of their growth into a group of traits which are familiar to us as parsimony, a sense of order and cleanliness—qualities which, though valuable and welcome in themselves, may be intensified till they become markedly dominant and produce what is called an anal character.

Intrigued, I asked some librarian friends about their bowel movements. "Libraries and bathrooms have always been a fascination of mine," admitted zine curator Billie Aul of the New York State Library. "My study of this problem has led me to think that it hasn't got anything to do with how anal libraries are. Rather it has to do with standing up for a long time looking at things that are just above your eye level. It probably only works with people who like books, as I think relaxation has something to do with it.

"This phenomenon has important implications for bookstores," she added. "Borders recently opened one of their chain stores here. I've tried to support the smaller local bookstores, but I always find myself at Borders. Why? I think it's the bathroom. If the other stores would open their bathrooms to the public, I'm sure much of their business would return."

Next in line was Jan DeSirey of the Hennepin County Library near Minneapolis. "For me it has to do more with guilt or anxi-

ety," she says. "I get anxious in bookstores. And the library I use most frequently is the one upstairs from Technical Services, where I work. I always feel rushed and guilty up there, no matter what I'm doing. Would therapy help? Deep breathing?"

Jan pointed me to an article from the September 1994 issue of Esquire in which Jerry Seinfeld reveals that he too has to poo whenever he's faced with shelves of neatly organized books. The writer of the article describes going into a bookstore on Ventura Boulevard in Los Angeles with Seinfeld, "despite Jerry's lifelong knowledge that bookstores affect his intestines as would any laxative. 'I think it's the quiet. It creates some sort of rectal anxiety, if you'll pardon the expression.' "

Finally, I contacted Nancy Bonnell-Kangas of the Columbus Metropolitan Library in Ohio and creator of "Nancy's Magazine." She suggested I start a zine, "Public Pooping: Libraries, Bookstores, Bodily Functions, Different Peoples' Experiences, and Possible Explanations." Don't tempt me.

Purge

From "The Last Supper," an article in Details magazine that launched a thousand fasts. Whenever I mentioned the piece and someone I knew had read it, they pointed out this paragraph:

Traditional medicine holds that if one is in generally good health, the digestive tract will be able to break down and eliminate all food that is consumed. But many doctors and nutritionists believe that eating a diet of processed food, white flour and rice, lots of meat and dairy, and only a little raw fruit and vegetables fills the system, especially the colon, with a kind of indigestible toxic waste that cannot be easily passed on. These sticky, mucus-coated globs cling to each other and to the lining of the colon, losing moisture and sometimes becoming dense and rubbery. In addition to providing a haven for parasites, these undigestible food remains literally poison the body with the toxins produced by their putrefaction. Fasting is supposed to give your body a break from its daily digestion and let it work exclusively on removing these repulsive residues.

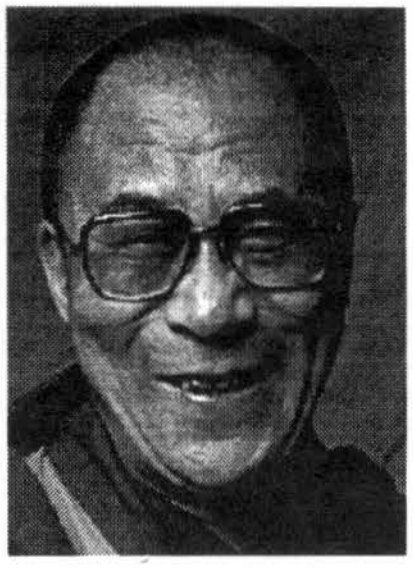
Belief

[Dramatis Personae

Mary Kay, a field service representative for the ABA
Chip, journalist who works at Playboy
George, board member at UFO institute
Matt, zine editor and ballet pianist
Jennifer, postcard collector]

[Scene I. George and Jennifer's Apartment in Chicago]

Mary Kay. I think I saw the Dalai Lama on an airplane.
All. Really?
Mary Kay. Yes, I think it was the Dalai Lama. He sat right in front of me.
Chip. (dubious) You did not see the Dalai Lama.
George. Where were you flying?
Mary Kay. I was flying from Chicago to Vancouver. He was wearing an orange robe and talking in a foreign language with the woman next to him.
Chip. What, were you in first class?
Mary Kay. No. Coach.
Chip. The Dalai Lama is not going to fly coach.
George. I think he might. I mean, he's not the pope!
Matt. Yeah, the pope has to have his own airliner.



Mary Kay. The Dalai Lama would fly coach. You know how those Tibetan people are so .... are so.... what's the word I'm looking for?
Matt. Self-effacing?
Mary Kay. No. It begins with a "D" I think. (The word eludes everyone.) If there were just some way to find out if I really saw him.
Matt. Why not look it up on the Internet?
Jennifer. Great idea. I'll bring up the Dalai Lama homepage!
George. The Dalai Lama has a home page?
Matt. Yep.
(Jennifer goes to the computer and brings up the Dalai Lama home page. A picture of His Holiness appears at the top of the page.)
Mary Kay. That's him. I know it. I did see the Dalai Lama!
Jennifer. Let's see... Itinerary for U.S. tour! What date did you see him?
Mary Kay. September 12th.
Jennifer. (reading from screen) September 11th he was in Boston. September 13th he was supposed to be in Washington, D.C.
Chip. I don't think he would fly to Vancouver in between.
Matt. Though it's possible.
Mary Kay. It really did look like him.
George. I bet it was the Dalai Lama. Send him an e-mail and ask him.
Mary Kay. That's a good idea. (E-mails the Dalai Lama)

> "I've kind of taken it in stride."
> *—Willie King, 55, after doctors cut off the wrong leg*

[Scene II. An Indian Restaurant]

Chip. (to George) What do you think about these new Roswell photos?
George. They are clearly fakes. Good fakes, but fakes.
Chip. Yeah, it's amazing how much unity there is in the UFO community about that.
George. The problem is the pictures don't match up to what we know based on eyewitness accounts from people who have been abducted. They are all wrong.
Mary Kay. Have you ever met anyone who was abducted?
George. No, but their stories corroborate very well, something that would be very hard to fake. I mean you would not be able to make up a convincing abduction story just by reading the literature that is available.

Jennifer. We met an abductee! What about that guy in Missouri who got sucked through the window?
George. Oh yeah. I guess we did meet him.

[Scene III. Mary Kay and Matt's car, driving Chip home]

Chip. You know, the big problem with all the alien abductions is it never happens to someone who is credible. Instead, it happens to white trash hicks in the middle of nowhere. Like, if they abducted Matt, I would totally believe it.
Matt. Give me a break. You don't even believe Mary Kay saw the Dalai Lama.

Finis

From ecdysis, available for $2 from Matt Wolka, 2457 W. Cullom, Chicago, IL 60618.

> "I've dated several men that were my equal. But I had to kill them."
>
> —*Madonna*

Neck

All my friends have heard this story, but it's fun to tell anyway: During the spring of 1990, I was employed as a bartender at the Royal Albert Hall in London. Three or four nights a week I would show up after my day job to tend to the concert-goers on the main level bar with several other chaps. I saw Eric Clapton's encore at least six times (he was there 18 sold-out nights and we work during most of the show pouring beers and booze). I was listening to the Beatles on my Walkman one night on the way to work. In "A Day in the Life," there's this line, "Now they know how many holes it takes to fill the Albert Hall," and I just stopped, whoa, that's where I work. It doesn't take much to impress me.

The second night after I started working at the Albert Hall, we were cleaning up and the only people in the bar were this 250-pound drunk, his friend, and their dates. The men were obnoxious, e.g. asking the women if they could see their boobs (the women thought it was hilarious, which is all I need to tell you about them). So I pass by and the 250-pound guy says, "Hey, two more brandies." Being a cocky young American, I replied, "You've had enough."

"What'd ya say, mate?" he said back, and cause I'm so tough, I put my hands on the edge of the bar and came back with, "I'm not going to serve you." So quick as a whip, the lout grabs me by the shirt (we wore formal shirts and bowties with Velcro fasteners) and pulls me up and onto the bar! I'm 6'6" so this is no easy feat.

I'm lying there on my stomach on the bar, my toes just barely touching the ground, and he asks again, "What'd ya say, mate?" I'm more pissed than afraid at that point, so I repeat the fact that I won't serve him. I keep thinking of the last physical confrontation I was in, which was in the fifth grade when Kenny Watts wiped my face out with a snowball. I got in a few good shots and I remember this guy Todd saying, "Rowe's pretty tough, he keeps getting back up," and me thinking, "Why do I keep getting back up?"

So this lager lout is holding me by the shirt and I put my hand on his neck and squeeze, trying to choke him. He doesn't even flinch. He's got a very thick neck, like a bulldog. His buddy sees this and puts his smelly mug in my face and says, "I think you'd better serve us." Meanwhile, my boss is two feet away with his back turned washing dishes and doesn't notice any of this (we weren't that loud, and it took about 20 seconds total). I'm frightened now and suddenly this guy grabs my hair, pulls my head to the side and bites me on the neck! I'm not kidding! He starts growling too. For at least five seconds he clamped his unbrushed teeth down on my fair skin, and I was like, "OKOKOK, what do you want?"

It didn't hurt, but it was really weird. I remember one of the women in the background touching the lout's arm and saying, softly, "Ray, Ray," but you knew that she couldn't say it too loud or he'd smack her. And he let go, and I stepped back, and real cool like straightened my shirt and tie and walked over to the supervisor, David. What do you say? I said, "Uh, David, that guy just bit me on the neck." And David said, "What?!"

So security came and escorted the guy out and just as he was about to leave he put his fist through a plate glass window in anger. And the other bartenders had a camera and they took snapshots of the bite marks on my neck.

by Chip. From "Eat and Get Out! For Good Waiters with Bad Attitudes," $2 from P.O. Box 267953, Chicago, IL 60626.

Chat

Scolenet: May I write an article about creative "DO NOT" signs in Asia and in Greece?
Chip: No, Closet Cleaner space is too precious.
Scolenet: May I write a riddle?
Chip: No.
Scolenet: May I write a Jumble?
Chip: No puzzles. Has school started yet?
Scolenet: Can't you feel the tenseness in my writing? Say, maybe I'll write about my memories of Mr. Ro. Like when he used to ride the school bus. He saved money that way. Ancient Korean secret.
Chip: People are talking about Pamela Anderson's breasts outside my office.
Scolenet: Will AOL zap me if I swear at you?
Chip: Try it.
Scolenet: Fuck.
Chip: What do you mean, f***?
Scolenet: My landlady is here.

Chip: What's she wearing?
Scolenet: Nothing. They're nudists.
Chip: Where do they put your rent? Hey, who's that?
Scolenet: My mom!
Chip: Oh, shit. I'll get under the bed!
Scolenet: Mom, really. Chip and I were just studying. No, we don't want cookies.
Chip: Yes we do!
MomCole: Turn that wretched music off.
Scolenet: It's Led Zepplin, Mom.
MomCole: Are you a devil worshipper, dear? Please keep your door open when you entertain young men in our house.
Chip: But Mrs. Cole, you're single now—how come your door is always closed?
MomCole: I'm knitting. I like it quiet for concentration.
Chip: Have you ever seen this movie called "The Graduate?"
MomCole: A lovely movie with Kevin Bacon.
Chip: Yeah, yeah, whatever. You need to relax. You're very tense.
Scolenet: I must go. Bye. I'll call.
Chip: Geez, I was just kiddin' about your mom!

Control

From an interview with Terry Zwigoff, director of an acclaimed documentary about cartoonist Robert Crumb. The interview appeared in Editorial Humor, a newspaper published in Boston:

Q: Is Robert [Crumb] financially solvent now?
A: I think he makes like $40,000 a year. I've seen him turn down $100,000 for one drawing. Toyota called him. They were doing an ad campaign and wanted him to do a drawing. He said, "I'm not a commercial artist. I don't work that way. I won't do something I don't have complete control over." And they said, "You'll have complete control. The only thing is there has to be a Toyota in there somewhere." He said, "OK, how about this: I draw a picture of a Toyota and show this guy shoving a headless girl into the trunk. Is that OK?" The guy said, "Well, of course we can't do that." And Robert said, "Well, then, I don't have complete control." I said, "Robert, take the money and give it to a good cause if you don't want it." And he said, "Ah, fuck good causes."

Spy

From "Wallflower at the Orgy," a book of essays by Nora Ephron:

The reason I write became quite obvious to me—and it turned out to have much more to do with temperment than motivation. People who are drawn to journalism are usually people who, because of their cynicism or emotional detachment or reserve or whatever, are incapable of being anything but witnesses to events. Something prevents them from becoming involved, committed, and allows them to remain separate. What separates me from what I write about is, I suspect, a sense of the absurd that makes it difficult for me to take many things terribly seriously. I'm not talking about objectivity here (I don't believe in it), nor am I saying that this separateness makes it impossible to write personal journalism. I always have an opinion about the orgy; I'm just not down on the floor with the rest of the bodies.

> "God gave us a penis and a brain, but only enough blood to run one at a time."
> —*Robin Williams*

Rebellion

From a Rolling Stone article about Mötley Crüe:

It's 5 p.m. the day before the show in Phoenix, and Nikki Sixx is poolside, drinking a Bloody Mary and eating a platter of shrimp. A proud mother brings over her four-year-old, Tommy, to meet him. "He knows all your music," she says.

"Hi Tommy!" says Nikki, shaking his tiny hand. "What do you wanna do when you grow up?" Tommy, shied into muteness, shrugs. "A rock star?" The boy nods.

Sixx is ecstatic. "You don't want to be a fireman or the president?" Tommy shakes his head no. "Why's that, so can get all the girls?" Tommy grins.

"You can do whatever you want," says Sixx, clearly happy to be preaching his main message to such a ready convert. "Go jump in that pool with all your clothes on!"

Tommy hesitates, frowning slightly. He looks at the pool, then at his mother, then at Sixx. "Go for it!" Sixx urges.

Tommy's mother's smile tightens. "That's too deep for you," she says and grabs his arms, leading him off.

"I love kids," Sixx says fondly, as he watches them walk away.

Nature

A sampling of reader letters printed in a recent issue of Destination Discovery, the magazine for viewers of the Discovery Channel:

- Some months ago I entered a subscription to your magazine in my daughter's name. After reading the article about AIDS ("A Journal From the Plague Years: Life in an AIDS Clinic"), which included quotes from male prostitutes, I realized I do not want my daughter exposed to this trash. This issue is a severe disappointment to me and my family, if not an out-and-out insult.
- The article by Kathryn Marshall ("Spellbound: The Mists of Choice") has no place in any magazine. She belittles the culture of the people she visited and attacks the Catholic church. The article is self-focused on one who seems to be at least tempted by the powers of darkness. It is becoming more widely known that feminists and otherwise unhappy women are among those tantalized and tempted by witchcraft; many are actively involved.
- Many people, well-meaning, well-educated, honest people all, insist on calling the environment "the ecology." When our own

Atlanta Constitution did it, I forgave. When Smithsonian magazine did it, I was upset for days, but I didn't write. Now you have done it ("The Last Page: It's the Ecology, Stupid.") I am convinced that ecology is the study of some, any or all environments, also legitimately called ecosystems, but not in good conscience the ecology.

- In the October issue, page 53, you refer to two-eyed sloths. Are there other kinds? Is this to distinguish them from spectacled bears?
- In a world that is rife with child pornography, how could you condone the cover of the September issue? The little girl with one strap hanging off her shoulder is an example of what is wrong today. Not only is it an unnatural pose (obviously the photographer set it up), it is done in a manner to suggest sex.

Speck

Am I the only one who's ever wondered about this? From the Mayo Clinic Health Newsletter:

Q: I've been noticing tiny specks and strings that dart into and out of my field of vision. Could this be serious?
A: Those semitransparent bodies are called "vitreous floaters." They may be annoying, but they don't affect vision. Floaters are shadows cast on the retina (the light-sensitive part of your eye) by microscopic structures in your vitreous humor (a clear, jelly-like substance behind your lens). Floaters develop as the vitreous becomes more liquid, a common condition with aging. Don't worry about floaters that appear gradually and become less noticeable with time.

Contract

First the Republicans offered their Contract With America, then the Christian Coalition weighed in with their Contract With the American Family. Both emphasized the importance of families; the Christian Coalition went so far as to demand tax breaks for parents and the defeat of a human rights initiative proposed by the United Nations because it would "usurp the parent-child relationship." But what about the many Americans, especially men, who don't have or plan to have kids? Sure, the American Single Guy has a Web page and a zine and a bachelor pad filled with leather furniture. But as of yet, no one has offered him a contract that doesn't involve monthly payments or military service. It's time single guys had a contract with America. Since it was the most recent manifesto to get headlines, we'll use the demands (or "suggestions," as Christian Coalition leader Ralph Reed puts it) presented to Congress in the Contract With the American Family. Are you listening, Newt? Since many single guys don't vote, probably not.

> What would a chair look like if your knees bent the other way?
> —*Bubba's Live Bait*

Christian Coalition contract "Religious equality," namely a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in school.

Single Guys contract Religious equality, namely a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in school, but only before tests that count for more than 40 percent of your grade. Prayer is also allowed at school sporting events if the home team is behind and you bet more than $50.

Christian Coalition Local control of education, including toning down sexual education that "emphasizes contraception and condom use rather than abstinence and self-control" and homosexuality as "an acceptable alternative lifestyle."
Single Guys Local control of education, including sexual education as 10 percent of all courses to increase attendance. Also, all lab partners must find each other attractive, and homosexuals will be placed in charge of all social events so they'll be fun.

Christian Coalition Legislation that would "enhance parents' choice of schools for their children."
Single Guys Legislation that would allow inner city parents to send their children to exclusive suburban schools at no cost. The suburban schools, however, would be physically relocated to the inner cities, so the ghetto poor wouldn't have such a long commute.

Christian Coalition Protecting parental rights to "direct the upbringing of their children," including education, health care, discipline and religious training. Also, defeat a proposed U.N. treaty which calls for children worldwide to be guaranteed the right to free expression and privacy.
Single Guys Protecting parental rights to "direct the upbringing of their children," except when that upbringing shapes them into bigoted, repressed, self-righteous adults, or worse, Communists. Also, impose a statute of limitations on moms who nag you even when you're 35. Also, remind the coalition that children are not pack animals.

Christian Coalition "Family-friendly" tax relief, including the eventual enactment of an $8,000 to $10,000 standard deduction for parents of minors.
Single Guys Single-friendly tax relief, including the enactment of an $8,000 to $10,000 deduction for the Americans who work longer hours and aren't subsidized for opting to have children. Also a standard beer, waterbed and big-screen TV deduction.

Christian Coalition Restrictions on abortion, including a ban on Medicaid funding of abortions, cutting off federal funds to Planned Parenthood and other groups that provide abortion counseling, and restricting late-term abortions.
Single Guys Keep abortion legal, but make it unnecessary by providing free contraceptives and pizza (including 24-hour delivery) to any single guy or gal who requests them.

Christian Coalition Restrict pornography on the Internet and cable television to protect children.

Single Guys Improve the quality of pornography with better scripts, ample lighting and more foreplay. Also, more girl-girl scenes please. Also, anyone who mentions pornography on the Internet must say where they found it.

Dog

After less than a year, the Canyon Ranch of canines on north Halsted Street in Chicago has found a following among mutts and pedigrees alike. In the coming months, Citizen Canine will be serving tea to and rubbing the tummies of some 2,500 pets that have booked reservations at this self-described bed and breakfast for dogs.

For $20 plus tax, a man can drop off his best friend for 12 hours of lavish attention. The B & B's brochure claims to provide its four-legged guests with massages in the morning and evening, afternoon tea, naps on Murphy beds, and supervised play with other resortees. And weather permitting, they get to swim in a wading pool and swing in hammocks. For a little bit more—$60 plus tax—Fluffy can spend an invigorating weekend in the B & B's renovated brownstone.

Owner Steve Malone says the customers are so satisfied that he has to cover the paw marks on the door leading from the waiting room to the play area with a fresh coat of paint at least once a week. My friend Claudia and I decided to find out for ourselves whether there was any bite to his bark. But our plans were foiled when the management said that I would not be allowed to tail her Yorkshire terrier named Perrier on his visit.

It seems they feared I would divulge details of their operating procedures and tip their competition off to the best way to massage the temples of a terrier. Furthermore, they said, Oprah Winfrey was supposed to be showing up on the same weekend. All the press attention, you understand, would rock the dogs' world.

I was at a loss for a disguise for an undercover infiltration, so Claudia and I decided to send Perrier on a solo mission. With his name, we figured, he would fit right in.

Before Perrier could be scheduled for his day of pampering, he had to be "interviewed" by the staff. Claudia wasn't sure how Perrier would fair, given his small size and timid disposition. Perrier shied away from one of the bigger dogs they brought out to test his reaction. But after sniffing around and peeing on the hardwood floors in the gift shop, Perrier seemed to loosen up.

The staff determined that a day at the B & B would help Perrier along in his "socialization" process and that he would mingle fine with the regulars. The official stay was booked for a week later.

Claudia spent a little extra time with Perrier in the days preceding, just to make sure he would know what to expect. When the big day arrived, she arranged his hair into a loose, playful ponytail.

At the spa, Claudia was comforted when Perrier peed in the same corner he had before, suggesting that he felt at home. But just as she was about to leave, a Great Dane came in and Perrier cowered. He gave her that "please don't go" look that he does every morning when she puts on her lipstick.

However, when Claudia came to pick him up, she was told that Perrier had romped around all day, taken a nice long nap, and enjoyed a relaxing morning massage. He had an especially hard time saying farewell to a small teacup poodle named Chanel. This new friend could explain why our little Perrier's rubber band fell out during his stay—and why he fell fast asleep on the drive home rather than throwing up from car sickness as he usually does.

Perhaps we'll never know exactly what happened that day, but it appears that Perrier took quite well to socialization, doggie style.

—Charlotte Snow

News

GUTHRIE, Okla.—First the six children of Robert and Donna Luster lost their parents, still listed as missing in the rubble of the Oklahoma City federal building that was blown up last Wednesday.

Then their landlord told the children, ages 6 to 21, that they were being evicted from their house within days, according to police.

Landlord Marion Gandy, 74, denies telling the children they had to leave. But he says a court order is an order, and they will have to be out by the end of next week.

"I'll let them stay a week extra if there is a funeral," he said Sunday.

CORRECTION: *Author Steven Bach is actually writing a biography of Moss Hart (Books), not of Mozart.*

Watson was polite and composed when he took the stand for the first time Wednesday. He adamantly denied killing McDaniel and stuck to the story that early June 7 he was at the home of his grandmother, ordained minister Katie Watson, praying for relief from a toothache.

■

Tricks and Bits

Return to Sender

Like most people, I love mail. Despite all the whining about lost letters (the Post Office delivers 171 billion pieces of mail a year), the U.S. postal system is one of the last great bargains of the 20th century. Even an e-mail addict like me still gets this warm tingly feeling when I open my post office box and a pile of letters and zines and catalogs tumble out.

Although it costs pocket change to send a letter from one coast to another, there are still people who try to beat the system. I remember reading about a state senator who would open his mail, answer it, then reseal the reply in the original envelope and mark it "return to sender." That's illegal, of course, as is reusing used stamps by cutting or steaming them off the envelope, even if they haven't been cancelled. When you do this, it's called a "skip" in postal lingo; it violates Section 1720 of Title 18 of the U.S. Code. Probably the most famous skipper of all time was the Unabomber, whom the FBI says often mailed letters with already cancelled stamps.

When the Elvis stamp came out in 1994, fans would affix it to mail with fake addresses to get a "Return to Sender" stamp on the envelope.

Postal laws also make it illegal to use counterfeit stamps (Christmas seals that look like stamps but that you figure might get by) or remove canceling ink from stamps. Until the Post Office got wise and changed its ink in the late 1980s, crooks did this with bleach and laundry detergent or water. The Post Office estimates that stamp laundering cost them $100 million annually, a figure now comparable to what businesses steal by rigging postal meters. How did the crooks gather all those cancelled stamps? They would bribe janitors and dig through the garbage at banks or utility companies. After retrieving piles of envelopes that had been used by consumers to send in payments, they would steam off the stamps, soak them and resell them for 10 or 15 cents each. The stamps' color would be faded, but the crooks would explain this by telling buyers that their business had been flooded and damaged the goods. If you attempt to duplicate this stunt, you'll face a $500 fine or up to a year in prison for each count.

One of the scams that has always fascinated me is the idea that you can reverse the destination and return addresses on a letter, "forget" to put postage on it, and have it delivered free of charge. Or you could take it a step further and just put the recipient's address everywhere. In February 1996, a homeless man in Miami caused a stir when he left a large envelope next to mailbox. Passersby thought it might be a bomb and called the police. Instead, it contained stuff the man hoped to send to relatives. He had placed their address in both the destination and return spots, figuring it would get delivered somehow even though it had no postage. Little did he know he was in violation of Section 1725 of Title 18 of the U.S. Code, which calls for a $300 fine. It might also be punishable as fraud, since you are intending to defraud the government of revenues. But it's still kinda interesting.

Another scam is to put insufficient postage on a letter and hope it slides through unnoticed. The post office sorting machines cancel stamps at a rate of nine per second, or 30,000 an hour, and they only have time to look for zip codes and stamps, not determine their face value. For that reason, the only envelopes that get bounced out of the system are those without *any* postage. The Postal Service delivers all mail with insufficient postage (although it may soon change this policy); the recipient is supposed to be given a "postage due" notice. But many times the delivery person just forgets about it (a news service tested this in 1990 and found that 31 of 34 letters it mailed with insufficient postage were delivered without postage due). Another popular scam even today is the idea that, because of some obscure postal law, you can mail any letter for six cents by stamping it "First Class." As any postal inspector will tell you, that law was repealed in 1970. And technically because of the postage due policy you can mail any letter for as little as a penny as long as the person on the receiving end is willing to pay your debt.

The post office even used to deliver mail that had no postage. But according to William Poundstone's book "Big Secrets," the agency stopped because so many people would send their bill payments to the IRS, utility companies or other evil entities without stamps, knowing the post office would deliver them "postage due" and Uncle Sam or the corporate bosses would have to foot the bill. Now if you send a letter without postage, it gets returned (although as even a homeless guy in Miami might tell you, this can still work to your advantage). That's why you sometimes see those reminders on preprinted envelopes in the space where the stamp goes: "Place stamp here. The Post Office will not deliver mail without postage." It's not because they think you're an idiot; it's to remind you that your political protest will be in vain. The IRS also no longer accepts any postage-due mail. It gets sent back to the disgruntled taxpayers, along with any nasty messages you wrote on the envelope.

If you do plan to let the IRS know how you feel about taxes, by the way, be prudent. Besides being on the lookout for stuff like bombs, weapons and child porn, the 2,167 agents of the postal inspector's office have jurisdiction over any letter, writing, post

card, picture, photograph, newspaper, pamphlet, book or other publication "which contains any matter advocating or urging treason, insurrection or forcible resistance to any law of the United States." Attempting to mail anything like that will get you up to a $5,000 fine or 10 years in prison if you're convicted, as will sending an "indecent, lewd, lascivious or obscene character" written on the outside of an envelope or on a postcard. Better use FedEx. (For more on postal inspectors, order Julee Peezlee's "Mail Art Postal Hassle Stories," $3 from P.O. Box 11794, Berkeley, CA 94712.)

One final note: Under their franking privileges, members of the U.S. Congress send some $50 million in free mail a year. They use this in many cases to send out "newsletters" that boast about their accomplishments and remind you to vote in the coming elections, all on our dime. You, of course, have to pay 32 cents to tell your representative what you think.

Consumer Safety Alert

Last year, a black engineer in Utah and his three sons sued the maker of Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia for $40 million. The man claimed he and his sons had suffered emotional distress when, while looking for information about the Niger River, he inadvertently typed "nigger." Up popped several entries, including those for Martin Luther King Jr., Drama, Black Americans and English Literature, all of which contained the word (the King entry described how the minister had been called a "nigger" when he was 11 by a group of white women).

To ensure that no other unsuspecting Americans with fumble fingers suffer emotional distress while using CD-ROM encyclopedias, please refer to the Closet Cleaner Tip Sheet, above right, whenever you need to look something up. Play it safe.

CD-ROM Encyclopedia Tip Sheet

Distressing Word:	*Be Careful Typing:*
shit	Shiite
asshole	Assyria
Satan	Sartre
honky	Wonka
fuck	fuchsia
goddamn	Rodham
damn	Danes
wop	doo-wop
bastard	Rasta
kike	Nike

Computer Follies

From Tech Support Tales, an online newsletter that collects anecdotes from computer tech support people (to subscribe free, e-mail the message "subscribe" to tektales@aol.com):

● I teach Macintosh courses at CompUSA. In one of my classes an artist could not figure out how to change the font size. So she would type in what she wanted, print it out, scan it in a different percentage, then paste it into the document.

● About a month after a customer bought a computer from us, she complained that her CD-ROM drive wasn't working. I look at the computer. She doesn't have a CD-ROM drive. She points at the 5 1/4-inch drive and says, "What kind of computer salesman are you? Can't you even recognize a CD-ROM drive when you see one?" Seems she had decided that because her CD fit quite nicely into her 5 1/4-inch floppy drive, it must be a CD-ROM drive.

● My friend Duane was on duty in the main lab on a quiet afternoon. He noticed a patron sitting in front of one of the workstations with his arms across his chest as he stared at the screen. When my friend asked if the guy needed help, he replied, "It's about time! I pushed the F1 button over 20 minutes ago!"

● One of our tech support guys here at SuperMac got a call from a mid-level government official in Trinidad. It seemed there was a coup attempt in progress at that moment. However, there was a combination lock on the door to the armory. Of the people in the capitol city that day, only the Chief of the Capitol Guard and the Chief Armorer knew the combination to the lock, and they had been killed. The combination is stored in a Macintosh file but the file has been encrypted with a SuperMac product called Sentinel. Was there any chance that there was a "back door" to the application, so they could get the combination, open the armory door, and defend the Capitol building and the legitimately elected government of Trinidad against the insurgents? All the while he is asking this in a very calm voice, there is the sound of gunfire in the background. After some scrambling, the tech support guy told the official that aside from trying to guess the password, there was no way through Sentinel, and that they'd be better off trying to destroy the lock. The official was very polite, thanked him for the effort, and hung up. That night, the legitimate government of Trinidad fell. One of the BBC reporters mentioned that the casualties seemed heaviest in the capitol, where for some reason, there seemed to be little return fire from the government forces. Yes, they shouldn't have kept the combination in so precarious a fashion. But it does put a lot more perspective on "I can't fix my mail server" complaints, does it not?

A New Word!

CYBERTAUGE: deleting all bookmarks at cybercafes and putting your Web site address as the default page and only bookmark choice. "Chip *cybertauged* New York's @cafe by adding cites to The Chip Electric."

copyright 1996 Chip Rowe. This word may not be spoken or written without my permission. You may not use the word even if you are asking me for permission to use it. Instead, call it "the word Chip invented."

Odds/Ends

● *From "The Diary of a New York Art Museum Security Guard," by David Berman, in the Baffler*: "I was operating the elevator when the repairman came aboard. After a lot of small talk, he let me in on an industry secret: The 'door close' button is not wired to anything. It's just a pacifier."

● *From .tiff:* "Next time you're at the ATM coercing it to spit out some green while a thug's got a gun stuck in your ribs, try this little bit of non-aggressive resistance: It seems that many ATMs come equipped with an anti-theft ambush code. When the crook demands you punch in your PIN, enter the digits 0000 instead. This signals the machine to gobble up your card, at which point you can explain that you must have exceeded your overdraft allowance."

● *From Information Week:* Researchers at Los Alamos National Laboratory have developed a data storage technique that uses an ion beam to inscribe data in a space the size of 500 atoms and saves it for up to 5,000 years. The technique has been used to store the equivalent of 12,000 diskettes (or 180 CD-ROMs) onto a 1-inch long pin of stainless steel.

● Mindvox (an Internet provider) made a very smart move four years ago when it called NYNEX (the regional phone company) and added a listing to the White Pages for "The Internet." If you were to call New York City directory assistance and ask for "The Internet," you get Mindvox's number. Several other companies have since caught on, and there are now numerous listings for "Internet," "The Internet" and "Internet Services."

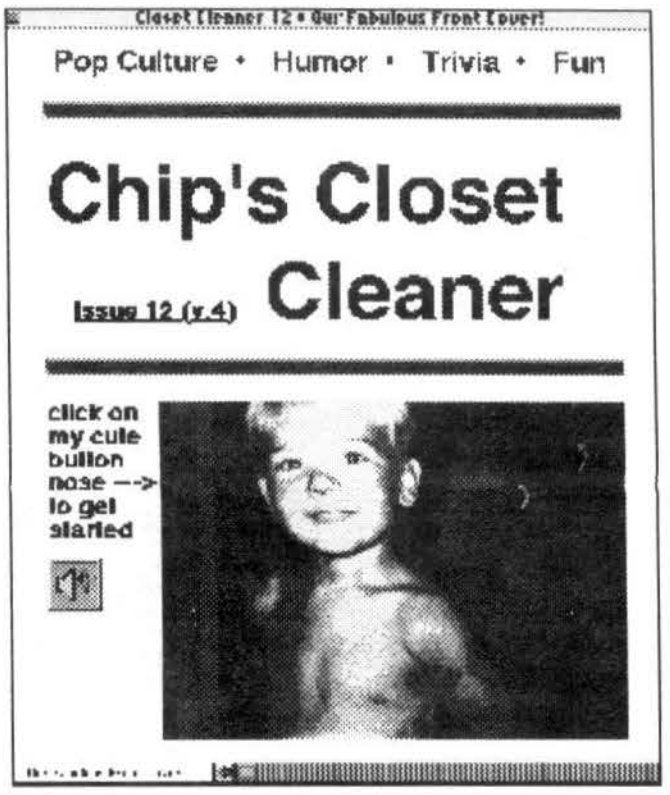
● *From United Press International:* "For years, the telephone prefix 555 was the province of directory assistance and fictitious phone numbers found only in movies and TV. But that changed in 1994 when the FCC authorized phone companies to issue 10,000 new numbers with the 555 prefix. About 1,700 have been given out since January 1995, mostly to businesses that want them because the 555 prefix is easy to remember, says Ken Branson, spokesman for Bellcore, the New Jersey-based research arm of the Baby Bells. The creation of the 555 prefix stems from the early days of television, when it became apparent that phone numbers dreamed up by TV writers usually had real-life counterparts who would invariably receive a flood of prank calls. Bellcore, which administers the numbering system for the United States and Canada, has set aside 100 numbers—555-0100 through 555-0199—for the entertainment industry to use, but TV reruns still pose a threat."

555 Directory

Charlie's Angels detective agency, 555-0267
Jim Rockford, "The Rockford Files," 555-2368
The Brady Bunch household, 555-6161
Captain Dobey, "Starsky & Hutch," 555-6772
Mary Richards, "Mary Tyler Moore," 555-7862
WKRP in Cincinnati, 555-WKRP (555-9577)
Fred Sanford, "Sanford & Son," 555-1079
Jaime Sommers, "Bionic Woman," 555-2368
Ann Romano, "One Day at a Time," 555-4124
Jennie Picolo, "Happy Days," 555-4242
Ed & Eunice Higgins, "Carol Burnett," 555-6634
Hart Industries, "Hart to Hart," 555-3233
Thomas Magnum, "Magnum P.I.," 555-2131
Vera Gorman, "Alice," 555-2834

● Last fall, a Philadelphia man and a San Francisco man filed class-action lawsuits against the nation's long-distance companies on behalf of millions of residential phone customers. Seems that the long-distance phone companies, in a scheme reminiscent of the urban legend about a bank manager who skimmed half cents of interest from customer accounts until he had accumulated millions of dollars, rounds residential calls to the nearest minute, even if you go one second over. Here's how it works: While business accounts are charged at six second intervals, residential accounts are billed at one minute intervals. That means if you make a business call that lasts one minute and one second, you're charged for one minute and six seconds. If you make the same call from a residential phone, you're charged for two minutes. AT&T's response to the lawsuit? "There is virtually no demand on the part of consumers for subminute billing." Funny, I don't recall them asking.■

The Chip Electric


Closet Cleaner 12 • Our Fabulous Front Cover!
Pop Culture • Humor • Trivia • Fun
Chip's Closet Cleaner
Issue 12 (v.4)
click on my cute bullon nose --> to get started

You can now retrieve back issues of Chip's Closet Cleaner online by pointing your World Wide Web browser to **http://virtumall.com/zines/chip**. The Chip Electric site includes plain text versions of past issues of Chip's Closet Cleaner, as well as articles I've written for other magazines about sex, basketball, free speech and fun. The site also contains links to my favorite Web sites, including the Movie Cliché List, Atomic Books, Tall Web, the Gerald R. Ford Museum and other topics mentioned in this issue. If you have time to browse, check out the E-Zine Builder Page, which provides tips on how to launch your own online publication, or the Spinal Tap Fan Page, which includes information about one of England's loudest bands and my latest creation, "This is the Spinal Tap Zine."

Despite massive public protest, I will not be translating the all-digital issue 12 into print format. You can download the Mac or DOS versions from my Web site, by anonymous FTP from ftp.etext.org/pub/Zines/ChipsClosetCleaner, or by gopher from gopher.etext.org:70/11/Zines/ChipsClosetCleaner. The other back issues are stored there as well, or I'll gladly send plain text versions of available back issues to anyone who writes me by e-mail at chip@playboy.com.

Issue 12 is also available on America Online in the Writers Club Libraries (closet12.zip or closet12.sea), and issues are featured sporadically in the Chip's Closet Cleaner area of The Transom (800-475-9689), a nifty online service that's growing hipper every day. If you hate me because I'm digital, see the review of New Philistine on page 52 for a kindred spirit.

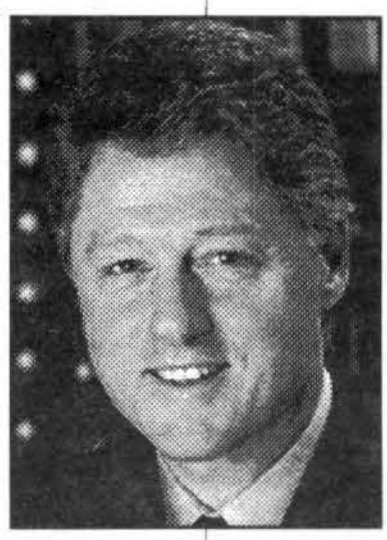
Famous Names

I got ahold of this newfangled CD-ROM phone directory (see page 29) and began to wonder what would happen if some loner guy named Chip Rowe was caught robbing liquor stores in his boxers? All my friends would say "I can't believe Chip Rowe would do that!" My parents' house would be egged. My name would forever be associated with a nutcase. Could happen, although the only guys I know who share my name are a dairy manager in a grocery store in Roebuck, Alabama, a lawyer for the U.S. Trade Association in Washington, D.C., and some guy who posed for a newspaper photo with a block of ice in Sutton, New Hampshire ("Search for Self via the Nexis Database," Issue 4). And then I saw that episode of "Seinfeld" where Elaine dated a guy named Joel Rifkin (a name this unfortunate goof shared with a then-vogue serial killer), as well as a story in George magazine where they tracked down people who have politicians' names (a black woman named Pat Buchanan and a social worker/weekend biker named Al Gore). All that got me thinking: Finding people with famous people's names is cute, but what about their lives? I mean, I got teased about my name as a kid, but nothing special. If your name is Bill Clinton, wouldn't it get old to have everyone saying, "Really, like the President?"? Would it be weird to read your name in the paper? Would you feel an obligation to vote Democratic?

I sent a questionnaire to 43 people who share famous people's names to ask about their daily trials and tribulations. Alas, the only Roseanne Barr in the country other than the comedienne has apparently moved from her stoop in Trinity, Alabama, (maybe she died of embarrassment). Bill Clinton of Pahrump, Nevada, passed away *in November*. One Shannon Doherty was actually Shannon Doug, one had moved and the third ignored me (bitch!). Two of three Clint Eastwoods left no forwarding addresses. More than one letter to John Lennon, Marcia Brady, Bob Dole and Dave Letterman came back with the foreboding "No Such Address" cancellation. A Howard Stern in Little Rock, Arkansas returned his questionnaire but didn't fill it out. Most surveys didn't come back, period. Yet after months of waiting (hey—people with famous peoples' names can get busy), my mailbox eventually welcomed seven completed surveys from semi-famous folks (a 16 percent response rate among people with famous names, for all you direct marketing majors). Chip Rowe of Chicago declared himself satisfied.

Bill Clinton
Washington, Indiana

Bill sent me a clipping from the January 24, 1996, Indianapolis Star headlined "What's in a name? For Hoosier Bill Clintons, a little mirth." A concrete truck driver, he's among four known Bill Clintons in Indiana and 20 in the United States. He told the Star, "I tell people that I'm Bill Clinton and I live in Washington, D.C.—that's Washington in Daviess County. Yes, I live in a white house and I do have a brother named Roger who lives in North Carolina."



How did you get your name?
I have always had the name Bill. It was taken from William. I didn't know about the other guy until three or four years ago.

Do people comment about your name?
When I tell people my name, they don't believe me. But it doesn't annoy me. I tell them I'm the real Bill Clinton and that other guy is an impostor.

Would you change your name?
No, I like my name.

Did you vote for him?
I voted for myself, sure.

When you see your name in the paper, are you tempted to clip the article?
No, there are too many.

Gerald R. Ford
Pittsburg, California

Mr. Ford was the only one of five Gerald R. Fords to respond, which showed good Midwestern values that the former president would have appreciated.

How did you get your name?
I was named 20 years before the former president gained national prominence. My mother liked the name Jerry. My middle name is a family name—my paternal grandfather. But my middle name is Richard, and the former president's is Rudolph.

Do people comment about your name?
I get comments about 70 percent of the time. Most usual is "Mr. President!" I promise them I won't fall down. The teasing is always good-natured and friendly. I respond with whatever wit I have at the time. I'm used to it since from birth I'd gotten comments because of Glen Ford and Henry Ford and everybody's cars.

Do you like your name?
As a child I didn't like Gerald, and as a teen in World War II, 'Jerry' was not a good name to have. But I've grown into it since.

What do you think of your famous counterpart? Did you vote for him?
I believe that Gerald Ford restored dignity to the presidency after the terrible ordeal of the Nixon resignation. I did vote for him.

His name made no difference.

Any funny anecdotes you like to tell friends?
When Representative Ford was gaining a national name as the Republican minority whip in 1960, I was a Navy ensign going to school in the Washington, D.C., area. One night when I presented my Diner's Club card to the maitre d' on the way into a nice restaurant. I was treated very very well. On the way out I was told, "Come back soon—Mr. Congressman."

Ronald McDonald
Rolla, Missouri

Mr. McDonald's wife answered his survey, since he and 64 other guys around the country who share his name are probably sick to death of morons like me asking about it. His wife has beautiful cursive handwriting. She signed the survey "Mrs. R.E. McDonald."

How did you get your name?
My husband was not named after anyone. His parents somehow liked the name. He was born in 1934, long before McDonald's was a thought.

Have you ever met your famous counterpart?
We do know a man who played the Ronald McDonald clown for this area.

Do people comment about the name?
All the time. I dread using our credit card, especially outside Rolla, because I knew we'll get remarks like "You've got to be kidding!" "Who would name a kid that?" or "How's business?" My husband handles it well but it is stressful at times.

Do you like your name?
Our friends and family call my husband Ron.

Have you ever been teased about your name?
We used to get phone calls during the night from kids at parties who would ask if they could order some Big Macs. Again, you can laugh at the first few but after a while it is pretty annoying.

Do you eat at McDonald's often?
Never.

Any funny anecdotes you tell friends?
In the early 1980s we were traveling to Louisville, Kentucky, when we stopped for gas. After a credit card was given, we noticed the young attendant with another young man pointing at us. They came over and said, "Are you really Ronald McDonald?" My husband quietly answered, "Sure, I'm the original" and we drove off. Also, my husband is active in a social service club in Rolla and the parents are always bringing their children up to meet Ronald McDonald.

Here's an "unfunny" incident: Our daughter was crowned homecoming queen at her high school in the middle 1970s and when they announced her name, they added that she was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ronald McDonald. There was a loud laughing in part of the crowd and it was an embarrassing moment on an otherwise perfect evening.

I wish parents would think long and hard before they name their children.

David Letterman
Clayton, Delaware

I forgot to ask Dave if he gets a lot of speeding tickets.

How did you get your name?
When I was born in the 1950s, my parents gave me the name David after the David of the Bible.

Do people comment about your name?
I've heard it all. They have a lot of smart remarks that they think are cute. I always have a snappy comeback.

Would you change your name?
Absolutely not.

Have you ever been teased about your name?
I wouldn't stand for it.

What do you think of your famous counterpart?
I haven't seen him too much, but he is humorous.

Is it weird to hear your name on the news?
No, but my kids get a kick out of it.

Any funny anecdotes that you tell friends?
Not really, but I do find that my name opens doors all over the country when I call people on business. What's not so funny is when people call you at 3 a.m. and ask if you are Dave Letterman, then laugh and hang up before you get a chance to give them a sound cussing.

David Letterman
Arlington, Virginia

My second Dave wanted to know about other Daves, so I sent him a list.

How did you get your name?
I was named first.

Have you ever met your famous counterpart?
I've been to the Late Show once, but we didn't meet.

Do people comment about your name?
Every day. They ask things like, "Do people always comment about your name?" Occasionally I'm asked for a "Top Ten" list or "Who's on the show?" or "You fixed the gap in your teeth" or "I bet you wish you had his money" or "Yeah, right, that's funny, now what's your real name?" I'm in sales so I constantly have to introduce myself.

What do you think of your famous counterpart?
I think Letterman is great. Maybe not as cutting edge as he used to be but still very clever.

When you see your name in the newspaper, are you tempted to clip the articles?
It used to be weird but I don't even notice it anymore.

Any funny anecdotes?

Every day I have funny run-ins. Every day, day after day, year after year. It's kind of bizarre when I think about it.

Marcia Brady
Waterbury, Connecticut

All grown up, Marcia Brady is a high school French teacher.

How did you get your name?
For 23 years my name was Marcia Liberatore. In 1969, I married Robert Brady. Since then, I've been Marcia Brady.

Have you ever met your famous counterpart?
Never had the pleasure.

Do people comment about your name?
People comment all the time. It never has annoyed me except for 24 years ago when I was in labor and all the nurses came to see Marcia Brady having a baby. Delightful. Many people believe that my last name is the name I was born with, and that I was named after the TV character. I find that flattering since I'm much older than that. Also, the TV character is blond and I'm brunette. The Italian version.

Do you like your name?
Yes, and I would never change it. However, I would change my legs with liposuction. At 50 they don't look that great anymore.

Have you ever been teased about your name?
All the time. I just laugh.

What do you think of your famous counterpart?
No thoughts. I'm indifferent.

Any funny anecdotes?
My classes are known as "The Brady Bunch." Recently two of my students won a poetry contest, but we didn't realize it because the announcer referred to our team as "The Bradé Bunch."

Sean Penn
Atlanta, Georgia

There was no one in the national phone directory named Madonna Ciccone.

How did you get your name?
There is no good story for it. The actor was born before me but didn't become a star until "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" came out in 1982. That was when my name became famous. Although I've always gone by Sean, my first name is actually William. People who learn that usually say something about the founder of Pennsylvania.

Do people comment about your name?
Everyone asks how Madonna is. I try to laugh and make the person feel like they are the first person to make that joke. I have been mistaken for the actor twice, both times when I ordered something over the phone.

What do you think of your counterpart?
I enjoy his work. He's a good actor and an excellent director. His body of work is varied and I think it shows great range.

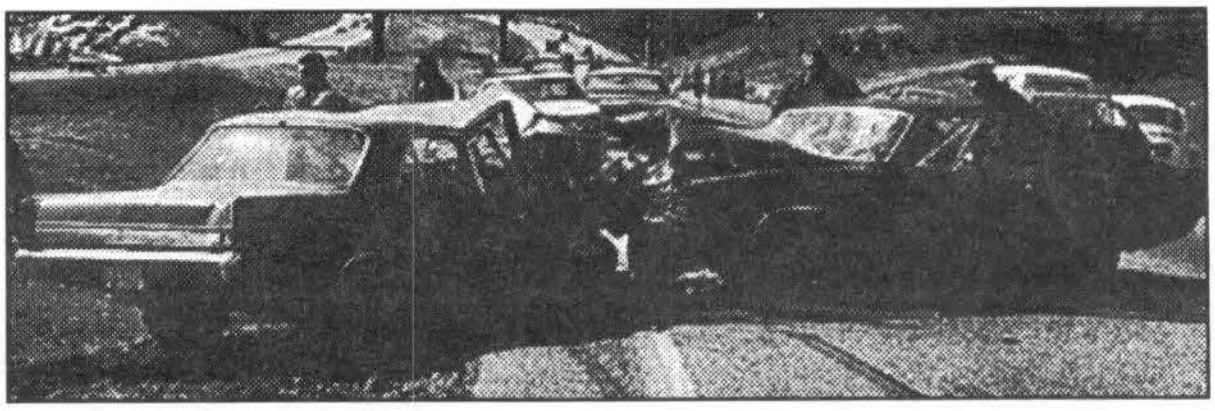
When you see his name in the paper, are you tempted to clip the article?
I save magazines where Sean Penn has appeared on the cover. I have several issues of Rolling Stone.

Any funny anecdotes?
I once called Vaurnet in California to order some sunglasses. When I gave them my name, they said I was already on the mailing list and that my address was in Redondo Beach, California. I had them change it. ■

The Zine for Accident Lovers

GAPERS

"We stop so you don't have to"



Rear-enders • Head-ons • Solos
All Amateur Action! • Gory Close-Ups
Special Dennis Rodman Pullout

Don't miss an accident just because you're on the wrong side of the median. We got photos you couldn't get if you wanted to!

photo courtesy The Last Prom/ad by Matt Wolka

Hiding from The Man

and ridding yourself of junk

As computers become more important in tracking our finances and "lifestyle selections" for marketers and bureaucrats, the boundaries of our personal lives move closer. We are prodded, targeted, surveyed and analyzed to a point where our lives become the sum of our statistics. The depth of the databases has grown to the point where a 1994 Harris poll found that 8 in 10 Americans believed they had lost control over how information about them was used.

"Privacy is the right to one's personality," wrote Louis Brandeis back in the 1890s, and Judge Thomas Cooley added about the same time that "privacy is the right to be let alone." These days it's more than that: It's the right to be considered a citizen before they notch you off as a "consuming unit." It's the right to exist outside of some database. It's the right not to be manipulated, coerced or ripped off because someone sold your personal security like teenagers dealing gum cards.

According to the Direct Marketing Association, more than 65 percent of the nation's major retailers use database marketing programs. In early 1996, the U.S. Postal Rate Commission lowered the cost of sending third and fourth-class mail (now called "Standard Class"), which makes sending large quantities of junk even more attractive. Because marketers collect information about us in many ways, it's probably impossible to take your name and personal information completely out of circulation. "We continually betray secrets about ourselves, and these secrets are systematically collected by the marketers' intelligence network," writes Erik Larson in his book, "The Naked Consumer," an account of the privacy wars. Even if you are able to resist letting your name into circulation, mail addressed to "occupant" or "resident" will still arrive, and just about anytime you buy something over the phone you're added to a new list.

In his book, Larson makes a great observation about how we are monitored. You may reveal some small bit of information about yourself—your home address or phone number on a sweepstakes entry at the grocery store—and think nothing of it. But with the increasing power of computers and the desire of marketers to compile complex "profiles" to predict consumer buying habits, that information can easily be combined with other info. Larson offers four "laws of data" in his book, and they're on the money. First, "data must seek and merge with complementary data"—that is, everything you reveal may be used against you. Second, "data always will be used for purposes other than originally intended." Third, "data collected about individuals will be used to cause minor or major harm to one or more members of the group who provided the information." And finally, "confidential information is confidential only until someone decides it's not."

That sounds grim, but you can take steps to lower your public profile. Doing so can reduce your chances of being conned or targeted for sales pitches considerably, and help you retain some sense that you have your own business left to mind.

Step 1: Find out what The Man knows

If you've ever applied for a credit card or gotten a bank loan (including a student loan), you have a credit report. Banks and credit card companies, among others, use these reports to determine if you're someone they should trust. Unfortunately, some analysts estimate that 50 percent of reports on file with the three major credit bureaus have incorrect information. The information in your credit report is available to anyone with a "legimitate business need," including landlords, employers and insurers. The credit bureaus also sell information about you to marketers, an issue we'll address later. First, you should order your credit reports. Not only is it a good idea to make sure the information is correct, crooks rely on the fact that most people don't check their reports until they have problems. Although two of the three bureaus charge a small fee, you can get a free copy if you've been denied credit within the past 60 days.

To get a copy of your report, send a letter that contains your full name (first, middle, last), any generational indicator (Jr., Sr., 2nd, etc.), your spouse's name (if applicable), your present home address, a daytime phone number, your previous home address(es) during the past five years, your Social Security number, your date of birth, and a copy of a bill or driver's license that contains your name and current address for verification. Be sure to sign your request. You should receive your report in about two weeks. The companies provide forms to challenge errors (my credit report, for

instance, included some of my father's credit cards). Here are the major credit bureaus:

TRW
P.O. Box 8030
Layton, UT 84041-8030
Phone: (800) 682-7654
Cost: free annually

Equifax
P.O. Box 105873
Atlanta, GA 30348
Phone: (800) 685-1111
Cost: $3 to $8
(phone first, varies by state)

Trans-Union
P.O. Box 390
Springfield, PA 19064
Phone: (800) 916-8800
Cost: $3 to $8
(phone first, varies by state)

The credit bureaus realize the value of the information they've gathered, and they use it to compile other databases. The $1.5 billion company Equifax, for instance, maintains a database that the insurance industry uses for claim histories. You can obtain a copy of your report by sending your name, address, driver's license number, date of birth, telephone number and signature to:

Equifax
Insurance Consumer Center
P.O. Box 105108
Atlanta, GA 30348-5108
(800) 456-6004
Cost: $5 to $8
(phone first, varies by state)

Another database used by the insurance industry is maintained by the non-profit Medical Information Bureau, which stores information about the health conditions of some 12 million Americans. MIB will search their records for $8. You must write first and request Disclosure Form D-2. You won't have a MIB record unless you have applied for individual insurance—life, disability or health—or received benefits from subscribing insurance companies within the past seven years. If you do have a MIB record, it's important to make sure that the information is accurate. Write:

Medical Information Bureau
P.O. Box 105, Essex Station
Boston, MA 02112
(617) 426-3660

Finally, it's a good idea to obtain a statement of earnings from the Social Security Administration every few years to make sure it doesn't contain errors, and that no one else is reporting income using your Social Security number (such as would happen if someone filed a false income tax return). To receive a statement, you need to submit Form 7004 Request For Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement. The form can be ordered by calling Uncle Sam at (800) 772-1213. Once you submit the form, you will receive a nifty report that shows all the income you've reported year by year, the Social Security you've paid, and an estimate of what your benefits will be annually when you retire (yeah, right).

Step 2: The Man will give you a number. Keep it safe.

Speaking of Social Security, it's a great idea to keep your number close to the vest. It's hard to believe these innocuous nine digits can cause so many problems, but if a crook gets it, he or she can screw you. Consider the case of a guy named Joe W. Woods. A con man managed to open 30 credit accounts in Joe's name, racking up at least $37,000 in charges and even using 30,000 of Joe's frequent flyer miles.

A lot of crooks get information about you by digging through the garbage and pulling out credit card receipts (why do so many stores print account numbers *and* expiration dates on receipts?), bills, bank statements or pay stubs. One gang caught last year in Atlanta stole more than $10 million in 10 states by taking discarded checks, deposit slip and credit card receipts from trash cans and using them to open fake accounts. Personally, I get a lot of satisfaction out of taking my old bills to work and shredding them.

Because your wallet or purse could easily get stolen, don't carry your SSN with you. Never pre-print your number on checks, business cards, address labels or other IDs (although some states use your SSN as your driver's license number). A savvy con artist who learns your SSN can use it to open a credit card account, rent a post office box and then apply for more accounts. Another dangerous situation that a lot of folks don't think about are those pre-approved junk mail credit cards applications many people pitch in the trash. What keeps a crook from submitting it for you, but with a "new" address?

You'll find that many merchants ask for your SSN when you purchase anything with a check. You should refuse. There's no law that prevents them from asking for the number, but there's no law that says you have to give it. You should explain that you fear it could be used by someone to set up a massive fraud, and that the card itself states clearly on it, "Not to be used for identification purposes." Usually merchants will allow you to supply another ID number, such as a driver's license number.

You can get more detailed information about SSNs by pointing your Web browser to http://www.cpsr.org/cpsr/privacy/ssn/ssn-privacy or sending the e-mail message "send usenet-by-hierarchy/news/answers/privacy/ssn-faq" to mail-server@rtfm.mit.edu.

Passwords are another important aspect of privacy, especially in the digital age. These combinations of letters and numbers are like the keys to your life, especially as we become more dependent on computers. Whether you have voice mail, bank access or even a bike lock, you are only as secure as your password. That's why you shouldn't use the same password for all your accounts. Your passwords should also be easy to remember (so you don't have to write them down) but hard to guess (for obvious reasons). Your bank PIN number, for example, should not be taken from your SSN, birthday, middle name, pet's name or anything else that a crook might be able to figure out.

As for the security on your Internet account, hackers use dictionary programs to break passwords. For that reason, your password should not be anything you can find in the dictionary (both English or other languages), slang words or names or cultural icons or names such as Madonna, Goethe or Clinton. *Use a combination of* letters, numerals, symbols, punctuation and upper and lower case, and change your password at least every few months, if not more frequently. If you must, use a familiar phrase or number and then intersperse a capital letter, a bit of punctuation and a number or odd letter to make it possible to remember but that much more difficult for someone to guess.

Step 3: When The Man comes looking for you, hide under a rock.

There are hundreds of ways marketers gather information about you. You may join a "buyer's club" or become a "preferred customer" who gets discounts when you shop if the clerk scans your membership card. That, of course, gives the retailer a chance to monitor your tastes and spending patterns. One really annoying method of getting the goods is Radio Shack's habit of asking for your name and address whenever you buy something at their stores. I always refuse, since they only need it to send you junk mail. Even some retailers who offer toll-free 800 order numbers used a system called Automatic Number Identification (ANI) to get the phone number you were calling from. Until the FCC cracked down on this in 1995, they could then sell your number to other marketers.

Other ways that marketers get your name is when you fill out rebate, product registration or warranty cards (many of which offer absolutely no benefit—be very skeptical of registration cards that imply your warranty can only be activated if you send in their consumer survey). They may also identify you from the phone book (a good reason to have an unlisted number); from non-profit groups to which you donate money; from clubs you belong to; and whenever you subscribe to magazines or buy over the phone from catalogs. They ask the credit unions for the names of all new credit card holders, since you're likely to be in a spending mood. Marketers also rely on public records such as marriage, birth, property and, until September 13, 1997, motor vehicle records (that's when a new law goes into effect that closes off public access to this information). Many states have forms to remove your name from the lists they sell to marketers.

You can't do much about the National Change of Address database maintained by the post office. Hundreds of entities, from businesses to mail order businesses to your congressman, buy names from this database to keep their records current. Until recently, you could pay three bucks and get a copy of anyone's new address yourself.

Sweepstakes are another method that

Send Your Letter, But Don't Expect Miracles

By Aunt Minnie

The Direct Marketing Association, a leading trade group, has set up something called the Mail Preference Service (MPS) to soothe irate consumers who get sick of being buried by junk mail. Over the years, DMA has fought off government regulation of the direct marketing industry and convinced most consumers, politicians and reporters that writing to MPS will "get me off the junk mail list."

Here's how it's supposed to work. XYZ Company prepares to send out its latest catalog. It rents lists of consumer names and addresses from other catalogs, magazines and charities and merges this data together with its existing customer list. Duplicate entries are deleted. XYZ then checks this master list against the MPS file and filters out any consumers who have written in to say they don't want junk mail. Everyone from The New York Times to Ann Landers has made MPS sound like a panacea for junk mail haters. But that's far from the truth. Here's why:

1. MPS is not run by DMA. It is actually run by a faceless company on Long Island. If you want to buy something from a catalog, you can phone an 800 number, use a fax number or even send e-mail. If you don't want to buy something, they aren't going to make it easy. The only way to get your name into MSA's database is to sit down and write a letter. Once you do, DMA does not send any kind of confirmation that it has received your request.

2. The MPS file is only available to DMA members (about 3,600 companies). When you consider that 65 percent of America's 14 million businesses use marketing databases, that means only a tiny fraction of mailers tap into MPS. DMA represents the most reputable direct marketers, those firms that would be glad to take you off their lists if you called them directly in the first place. The less reputable mailers don't give a hoot about MPS.

3. DMA members have to pay for the MPS list. DMA charges up to $600 a year for the MPS file. Mailers are currently facing exorbitant paper prices and a recent increase in postage. Many are probably tempted to pocket the money usually earmarked for MPS.

4. MPS is slow. The file is updated monthly, but many businesses rent the MPS file on a quarterly basis. That means you might not see a difference in your mail flow for three months!

5. Every January, MPS file clears out any names that have been on for five years. That means the consumer must renew his or her request every five years. Do you think DMA reminds consumers of this? Fat chance. It's not in their best interest to have a huge "no mail" list. Mail order is, above all, a numbers game. Companies design their offers to make a profit even if 95 percent of their mail gets thrown in the garbage. For high-ticket items, companies can make a profit even if only 1 percent of consumers respond.

Considering how the MPS really works, there may not be any surefire way to avoid junk mail. But you get rid of a lot of it. Companies, like people, only know what you tell them.

Aunt Minnie works for a direct marketing company but hates junk mail.

salespeople use to get your name and personal data. Beyond the highly visible ones like Publisher's Clearinghouse, you often see small boxes by the cash registers in businesses offering you a chance to win a trip to some sunny spot. Of course, they may only have a drawing once every five years. In the meantime, they collect all the names and follow up with phone solicitations, since you've "expressed interest" in travel and package vacations. Never enter these type of contests—you can only lose by ending up on a list aimed at "opportunity seekers," known in the business as "sucker lists." (My mother sent for one of those "envelope stuffing" info kits and got deluged with similar offers within weeks.)

An ominous development during the past year has been the encroachment of marketers on cyberspace. A company called Email America, for instance, used a program to gather the online addresses of 20 million people who used any of thousands of Usenet discussion groups. The firm offered this list to marketers in chunks of five million names for $99. Another firm, The Marketry of Bellevue, Washington, did much the same thing, compiling 250,000 e-mail addresses per month from Internet discussion groups, then organizing them for salespeople into categories like pets, science, computers, etc. Not much you can do about that but stay offline and protest to any companies that try to profit from e-mail addresses.

You can write marketers directly and ask that your name be removed from their solitication lists. A good strategy is to save the junk mail you get to make sure that any variations of your name or address are included (I've received mail as Chip Rowe, Charles Rowe and C. Rowe). A first step is to write the Direct Marketing Association. By sending your name and address, you'll be added to a list of people who don't want to receive junk mail. This list is honored by most large marketers, although you should read Aunt Minnie's reality check on page 47. For what it's worth, contact:

Mail Preference Service
P.O. Box 9008
Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008

You can also write to be taken off many telemarketer's lists. Send your name, address and telephone number to:

Telephone Preference Service
P.O. Box 9014
Farmingdale, NY 11735-9014

If telemarketers do call you, tell them politely that you want to be placed on their "don't call list." A federal law (Title 47, subsection 227 of the U.S. Code) requires them to do so. The 1991 Telephone Consumer Protection Act also made autodialers, junk faxes and prerecorded sales pitches illegal. You can sue telemarketers who violate the TCPA for $500 per violation. All you have to do is keep records of the date and time of the repeat call(s). A handful of vigilante consumers have earned a few grand of spending cash this way.

To cover all the bases, you might also want to write the following marketers:

National Demographics & Lifestyles
List Order Department
1621 18th St., Suite 300
Denver, CO 80202

R. L. Polk & Co.
List Compilation and Development
6400 Monroe Blvd.
Taylor, MI 48180-1814

Donnelley Marketing
Database Operations
1235 N Avenue
Nevada, IA 50201-1419

Metromail Corp.
List Maintenance
901 W. Bond
Lincoln, NE 68521

Database America
Compilation Department
100 Paragon Drive
Montvale, NJ 07645-0419

ADVO Inc.
Director of Lists Maintenance
239 W. Service Rd.
Hartford, CT 06120-1280

Of course, many marketers will get your address and phone number from the white pages. If you can't afford an unlisted number, ask the phone company to not list your street address in its directories. Or put a fake name such as E. Presley with your number. That way you'll know any mail with that name is junk without even opening it.

And don't forget the credit bureaus, which sell the personal data they collect for your credit reports (but not your actual credit information). When you receive your reports, there should be a section that lists all the companies that have requested your name and address to solicit you. You can prevent anyone but the bureau from having your name by asking each not to sell your personal data. Most now allow you to do this over the phone. Trans Union (800-241-2858) says it will also notify its competitors, but play it safe by calling Equifax (800-219-1251) and TRW (800-353-0809) as well.

A few consumers who are annoyed that marketers sell their personal data are fighting back. Ram Avrahami, who lives outside Washington, D.C., sued U.S. News & World Report for renting his name to Smithsonian magazine. Ram says the magazine makes money off his name (8 cents per rental) without his permission, and he cited a Virginia law originally intended to ban unauthorized use of celebrities' names for advertising or commercial purposes. The case was thrown out of small claims court but Ram says he's going to the next level. Insiders doubt he'll win, but it's an interesting battle all the same. In California, meanwhile, Robert Beken took Computer City to court after he wrote a "contract" on the back of his check that said "By accepting this check, Computer City agrees not to send me any mail." When the store did, he sued.

If you'd like to learn more about how to protect your privacy, contact the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, 5998 Alcala Park, San Diego, CA 92110, or phone their privacy hotline at (619) 298-3396. Online, write prc@acusd.edu or point your World Wide Web browser to http://www.acusd.edu/~prc for more details about the topics discussed in this article. Another excellent source on the battle over privacy is Erik Larson's book, "The Naked Consumer: *How Our Private* Lives Become Public Commodities." A reporter for the Wall Street Journal, Larson provides a fascinating account of how the government gathers and distributes data about its citizens. That same information is manipulated by marketers to sell us stuff. More importantly, he discusses what the future holds for our fundamental right to be let alone. ■

Whose Lists Are You On?

From the "Lists & Databases" section of an issue of the weekly Direct Marketing News. The section describes lists of names, addresses and other info offered for sale by database brokers:

■ Ohio Magazine (80,000 subscriber names: "the average household income is $58,200; the average net worth is $247,800; the average investment portfolio is $120,000")

■ Traditional Jewish Donors (7,070 names: "individuals who have contributed to an organization that offers medical aid and financial assistance to poor Jewish families in Israel and the United States")

■ Jerusalem Product Gift Buyers (3,996 names: "buyers who spend an average of $35 for handcrafted gift items for bar mitzvahs and other special occasions")

■ Fundraising Executive Bookbuyers (13,000 names: "nonprofit organization executives who have purchased books on fundraising, direct mail or other related marketing topics")

■ Quality Restores Beauty (75,400 names: "individuals who have spent $49.95 to receive a furniture refinishing kit")

■ New Horizons: The Science and Practice of Acute Care (280 names: "hospital-based specialists who treat patients in the ICU")

■ Jane Tucker's Children's Merchandise Buyers (600,000 names: "parents of children age 0-6 who have purchased products from the Jane Tucker Supermarket of Savings co-op")

■ Affirmative Action Coordinators at Public School Districts (4,937 names: "coordinators who supervise equal opportunity education and employment in school districts")

■ Amer-Hispan Consumers (709,207 names: "Hispanic consumers with demographic enhancements")

■ Americans for Responsible Television (188,910 names: "individuals who expressed concern about excessive violence and exploitative sex on television")

■ Webmasters/Internet Providers (5,000 names: "managers and developers of sites on the World Wide Web")

■ ABC-Agricultural Truck Owner Study (104,345 names: "farmers and ranchers with gross incomes of more than $100,000")

■ San Francisco Patrons of the Arts (17,946 names: "subscribers, ticket buyers and donors who support the symphonies, operas, ballets and other arts of the Bay area")

■ Pennsylvania Wildlife Activists (13,000 names: "contributed at least $36 because of the work this group has done to protect the state's environmental resources")

■ Men Are From Mars (32,950 names: "gathered from an infomercial, these men and women are seeking to improve their relationship with the opposite sex")

■ Pager/Beeper Owners File (215,000 names: "Selections include phone numbers, age, income, gender and credit card holders")

■ C.N.S. Marketing (9,452 names: "buyers who responded to a work-at-home offer and spent $37 for an introductory kit of Herbalife products")

■ Johnnie D's Films (62,357 names: "mostly male audience responded to a direct mail offer and purchased one or more adult videos or other adult entertainment")

■ Military History Buffs (184,166 names: "individuals who purchased books on strategy, military and naval campaigns and armaments thoughout the ages")

■ Ultra Affluent (2.4 million names: "business executives, philanthropists, socialites and professionals who have average incomes of more than $75,000")

■ GamePro (38,848 names: "subscribers who spend an average of $24.95 for video games")

■ The Christian Voice Active Donors File ("these $5-plus, 0-24 month donors supported this religious right organization led by Rev. Robert Grant")

■ Moral Government Fund (7,582 names: "Christian activists who support a campaign to clean up Congress and the presidency")

■ Donors of Compassion List (122,000 names: "individuals who contributed $25 or more to support moderate or liberal causes")

■ Environmental File (675,050 names: "environmental officials, executives and agencies")

■ Pharmacy Decision-Makers (76 names: "pharmacy decision-makers at all 50 state Medicaid agencies")

■ Geologists and Geophysicists (27,467 names: "geotechnical engineers and specialists in various geosciences")

■ New York City Gay Men's Chorus File (8,290 names: "donors and supporters who attended many of the concert series that the chorus produces. The average ticket price was $25")

■ Engineers & Engineering Firms (50,780 names: "the sources for this file are directories and Yellow Pages")

■ Empowered Female Conservatives (51,750 names: "These individuals are active viewers of political television shows. A majority donated to the cause") ■

Lists & Reviews

The Munchkins Remember: The Wizard of Oz and Beyond

I found this short book on a high shelf. Author Stephen Cox, after growing up as a friend to a former Munchkin, set out to account for the "little people" who appeared in the 1939 Technicolor classic, "The Wizard of Oz." Like many kids who grew up with black-and-white televisions, I never realized the movie had a color segment until I rented it as a teen. The Munchkins, like the Oompa-Loompas in "Willy Wonka," held me spellbound; Cox calls their 10 minutes on screen "one of the most enchanting sequences ever encased in celluloid." Of the 122 actors hired to portray the tiny townspeople, Cox located 28 and kneeled down to ask about their experiences during their seven weeks on the set in November and December 1938. Fifteen he traced had passed away, and several who claimed to be former Munchkins were not. And Munchkins are still turning up. One little person not listed in Cox's book is Karl Slover, the 78-year-old who last year became a pawn in David Copperfield's love games. The magician wanted to celebrate the first anniversary of his marriage to supermodel and Oz fan Claudia Schiffer in a special way, so he introduced her to Slover. Cox also spoke to three of the dozen actors who were hired as children to fill out crowd scenes. The Munchkins were brought to Hollywood by an agent named Leo Singer, who specialized in little people vaudeville and who had earlier supplied the cast for the all-midget musical, "The Terror of Tiny Town." He paid each Munchkin $50 to $75 a week. Singer hired only midgets because they were proportional like average-size people. Dwarfs have slight deformities, making them less adept at dancing and moving about fluidly. In the book, Cox describes the actors' memories of the shooting, Judy Garland, the hotel where they stayed, the train trips to and from Hollywood, and how they were selected for particular parts. He also discusses rumors that the Munchkins were a wild bunch. This fallacy was popularized by the farcical 1981 film "Under the Rainbow" (in which dwarfs played midgets who played Munchkins) and by Judy Garland, who in 1967 disparaged the Munchkins as "little drunks." The surviving Munchkins dispute this, saying that for the most part everyone acted professionally. After dispelling such rumors, Cox devotes a chapter to settling a controversy over who played the Munchkin Mayor. Before he died in 1984, Prince Denis claimed the role, but Cox's research shows it was actually Charley Becker, who died in the early 1970s. Cox also discusses the day during filming when Margaret Hamilton, who played the Wicked Witch, was severely burned. Several of the Munchkins claimed that they rescued her from the flames, but before her death in 1985 Hamilton said she didn't recall any short people helping out. (Dutton, 1989)

Inquisitor

Dany Drennan is a curious guy, and you see it reflected in his quarterly zine. Even if you can't sink your teeth into the prose, which centers on technology, art and pop culture (with a bit of medieval torture thrown in to harden the edges), Drennan's design is clean enough to eat off of. I did, in fact, the night my Velveeta and Shells were ready before I had finished his article on building your own user interface with parts you can get at Radio Shack. I plowed ahead not because you have to admire a guy who not only knows the fine art of creating a GUI (that's graphical user interface) but goes through with it. The first issues also include lighter fare, such as a diary of observations about life in New York, a funny story about gathering public records about singer Chris Isaak, and a fond look at toys like the Fisher Price PXL 2000 kid video cam. I want one. ($5 from P.O. Box 132, New York, NY 10024. Web: http://www.inquisitor.com)

Office Supply Junkie

Office supplies have been getting a bad name lately, only because a few dimwitted criminals have found them handy for stick-ups. Slick Stew, a past contributor to the Closet Cleaner ("How to Cheat on the S.A.T.," Issue 9), sent me an article he wrote about criminals whose weapons of choice double as office tools. "Since 1981, staplers have been used in at least one murder, one attempted murder, three armed robberies, a police beating of a suspect and a prison uprising," Stew writes. "Since 1989, letter openers have been used in at least five attacks. The mayor of Clearwater, Florida, was killed seven years ago when a man hit him over the head with a hole punch. Office supplies are the perfect tools of crime. There are no licenses required and no waiting periods." Knowing their reputation was in danger, you can imagine how relieved I was to discover Office Supply Junkie. Published by the same wise guy who produces Baby Split Bowling News, the zine in which every article has a reference to America's favorite pastime, OSJ features confessions and interviews with brave souls who openly admit their addiction to all things organized. It's a world where Staples and Office Depot are considered holy mosques, where paychecks are squandered on stackable filing trays, disposable pens, three-ring binders and yellow legal pads. OSJ helped me understand why I felt remorse throwing away the heavy vinyl, slightly grimy binder pages I purchased for 10 cents apiece to store 5 1/4-inch computer diskettes I don't own. If you're good or lucky, you can even find a way to organize the organizers. ($4 from P.O. Box 7205, Minneapolis, MN 55407)

Transparent Tape

Written by Vicki Lansky, a contributing editor to Family Circle and author of such books as "500 Uses For Baking Soda" and "Don't Throw That Out!," this 100-page charmer contains 350 "simple and surprising" uses for transparent tape (complete with index). The book begins with a nine-page report on the history and manufacture of transparent tape (it was invented by Richard Drew of 3M in 1930 shortly after he perfected masking tape) and continues with advice on making your life more efficient by applying generous doses of SSO (sticky side out). Beyond the tips that aren't obvious filler ("use tape to repair a torn book cover" "use tape to repair broken eyeglass frames"), most of the advice is downright exasperating. Putting SSO tape between your counter and your stove to prevent crumbs from falling into "hard-to-clean" spots might work, but who the hell cares if crumbs fall down there? Placing tape over the salt shaker holes so it won't spill when you turn it upside down for a refill sounds like an OK idea, but why are you refilling your shaker if it's not empty? Taping receipts and warranties to the back of new appliances ("except ones that get hot") comes off as innovative, but save your tape and just buy a big manila envelope. Lansky also suggests: 1/ taping all your remotes together so you won't lose them; 2/ taping a three-inch piece of tape to the bottom of your door so you'll know if there's been an intruder when you return, 3/ taping your broken credit card until you get a new one, 4/ taping around your head to mark a straight line when trimming your bangs or sideburns, 5/ taping a pill to the

face of your watch so you won't forget to take it, 6/ taping index cards to make nifty "laminated" IDs, 7/ taping loops to the back of anything cut from paper to make stickers, and 8/ taping waxed paper to a kid's arm "when your child needs a sympathy bandage and you don't want to waste a real one." (Good God, woman—give the kid a bandage!) Although overall this book was aggravating (I taped it shut), I did spot three tips that might be useful: 1/ "Put a piece of tape on a young child's finger when trying to photograph him or her. It makes for some interesting facial expressions when trying to photograph him or her!," 2/ wrapping tape around your fingers while polishing shoes will prevent polish stains, and 3/ "put a piece of tape over your flash to prevent red eye" (does that actually work?). Finally, one tip struck me as so odd in this enlightened age I could scarcely believe it appeared. In the chapter on using tape to raise your child, Lanky suggests "taping eyelids partially closed to make your child look Oriental if

from "Transparent Tape"

he or she is required to play that role in a school production." Yikes! Hey Vicki—how about covering your kid's face with transparent tape and applying shoe polish? Then he can appear in blackface without a lot of mess! (The Book Peddlers, $6.95)

55 Bad Fortunes

1. You will never know the magic word.
2. The sun rises in the East and beats your ass.
3. Ninety-five percent of the things you worry about will never happen. The other five percent will kill you.
4. If a pigeon poops on you, do not blame the pigeon, blame the poop.
5. You will break it; you will buy it.
6. Your assumptions are wrong.
7. Your winning smile will get you nowhere.
8. You are sitting on gum.
9. The lesser of two evils is still evil.
10. Ancient Chinese secret: You're screwed.
11. I know I am, but what am I?—Descartes, on the playground
12. Be decisive. Maybe. If you want to.
13. You've got something in your teeth.
14. If a man slaps you in the face, turn the other cheek and shoot him.
15. O.J. knows you did it.
16. You have many unique talents, none of which are marketable.
17. Next time, borrow a life.
18. The Tooth Fairy will step on your face.
19. Have you put on weight?
20. Two words: Nose job.
21. She was faking.
22. Embrace mediocrity. It suits you.
23. Beware of 10-year-olds with pennies on skyscraper roofs.
24. One man's life is another man's punchline.
25. You've always been a little different, haven't you? Now put your clothes back on.
26. Nice booger.
27. 2,390,670,980 fortunes=one tree. Please recycle.
28. Cash value: 1/20th of a cent. Spiritual value: Yang.
29. Who dressed you?
30. Live and don't learn.
31. Sorry, this is a BYOF cookie.
32. You gonna eat that?
33. Your Indian spirit name is Ralphputian.
34. Your partner in life will be bad-tempered but serve a mean dish of chili.
35. A short man will tell you a tall tale.
36. You will be injured in a disco inferno.
37. You will have bad sex and bad pizza, in that order.
38. Your name will appear in the newspaper in a matter involving the American justice system, pudding and naked abandon.
39. You will take a long journey and forget to turn off the stove.
40. While you are giving an important speech, someone in the audience will ask, "Are you imagining us in our underwear?"
41. [Fortune Delivered by ESP]
42. You will sink and rust.
43. Social Security will run out the day you retire.
44. You will throw up on a train.
45. Kato Kaelin will rent your room.
46. You will have one of those days for a year.
47. You will be halved by a bad magician.
48. Your grandmother will see you on "Cops."
49. You will swing your arm and hit a lawyer.
50. Everything about you is getting smaller.
51. You have a spider in your ear.
52. Teenagers will begin using your first name as slang for "gross."
53. Your guardian angel got laid off.
54. Your pets have never liked you.
55. People are just being nice.

Heinous

Evel Knievel is no saint, but he sure could ride a motorcycle. He could also fall off a motorcycle, which is how he became famous. Steve Mandich, who grew up imitating Evel on a banana seat bike, devotes much of his zine to the history and legend of the King of the Stuntman. It's all here, from the soaring attempt to span the Snake River Canyon in a rocket-powered X-2 Skycycle to the dozens of flights over buses, demolished cars and casino fountains. A notorious drinker and womanizer who at one time owed the IRS $7.6 million in back taxes, Evel retired in 1980 to write poetry and hone his artistic skills. The daredevil who once soared with the birds now paints them. His most recent performance was opening for the singer Beck in New York City, where he showed film clips of his best crashes. ($2 from P.O. Box 10412, Portland, OR 97210)

Critical Condition

You don't even have to see one B-movie in your entire life to appreciate this zine of "obscure and bizarre films on video." Published quarterly, each issue is packed with editor Fred Adelman's reviews and synopses of dozens of gore, horror and exploitation movies. Take "Shakma," a 1990 sleeper starring Christopher Atkins and Roddy McDowell (yes, they're both still alive): "A baboon injected with an experimental drug is slaughtering college students who are playing a Dungeon and Dragons-like game in a locked university building." If a bad movie's *really* bad, Fred will say so. ($3.50 from 215 B Overmount Ave., West Paterson, New Jersey 07424)

Big Jim

Nobody remembers Big Jim. He was like G.I. Joe but smaller and cheaper so I could afford him on my newspaper delivery boy's salary. Jim had this button in his back that when you pressed it, made his arm do a karate chop. He also had very well-crafted thigh muscles. I had a Big Jim ambulance, a Big Jim Corvette (with laser guns that popped up from the hood) and a rugged rescue truck with a tow rope for retrieving other Big Jims that fell over cliffs. Things started going downhill when I asked my dad to build me a tiny fort and I insisted there be a bedroom so Jim could seduce Barbie in his cardboard and felt bed. Soon I had other interests and willed my dolls to my brother Chad, who promptly tortured Big Jim and broke his limbs off. If Chad ever becomes a serial killer, I'll have a story to tell the reporters. (Chip's contribution to the "Retro Hell" issue of Ben is Dead, $5 from P.O. Box 3166, Hollywood, CA 90028)

FAT?SO!

Marilyn Wann is fat. What's it to you? Her zine, written "for people who don't apologize for their size," is funny, ornery and, dare I say it, sexy. The extra-large issues have included cut-out dolls, flip books ("the incredible expanding

Oprah!"), an investigation into the height and weight tables used by life insurance companies to determine who's "normal," a report from Disneyland (Thunder Mountain and the Haunted Mansion are among the roomier rides) and an interview with Wendy the Snapple Lady.

But don't get the idea that just because this zine is fat, it's also jolly. Marilyn argues that just as racial and gender differences contribute to the diversity of our society, so does size. "Practice saying fat until it feels the same as short, tall, thin, young or old," she writes in the FAT!SO? Manifesto. "And stop lying about your weight on your driver's license!" As Marilyn loves to say, "A waist is a terrible thing to mind!" ($3.50 from P.O. Box 423464, San Francisco, CA 94142. Web: http://www.fatso.com)

Being Digital

Inside its innovative dust jacket, Nicholas Negroponte's bestselling tome contains tidbits about the digital revolution that make you think, "Sounds cool." I couldn't get through it for months, however, despite its visionary fervor. You have to concentrate. I marked a few passages that got me thinking, such as this one: "Why not make the Universal Product Code able to radiate data? Every teacup, article of clothing and book in your house can say where it is. In the future, the concept of being lost will be as unlikely as a book being out of print. A novel approach is being developed by Olivetti of England. Wearing one of their UPC badges allows the building to know where you are. When you have a call, the phone you're nearest rings. In the future, such devices will not be tacked on with a clip or safety pin but securely attached or woven into your clothes." That scenario is both tantalizing and scary. Negroponte also points out how fax machines are stupid because they're not a bridge to any new technology. They're nothing, actually, besides clumsy toys that add unnecessary steps to the process. "Fax is a Japanese legacy because their culture, language and business customs are very image-oriented. The pictographic nature of Kanji made the fax a natural. Since little Japanese was then in computer-readable form, there were few disadvantages. On the other hand, for a language as symbolic as English, fax is nothing less than a disaster as far as computer readability is concerned. Most business letters today are prepared on a word processor, printed out and faxed. Think about that. We prepare a document in computer-readable form. Then what do we do? We print it on paper so we can convert it back to digital and fax it." (Knopf, $23)

A.Word.A.Day

I signed up with this e-mail discussion group in an attempt to increase my vocabulary above that mythical eighth-grade level they force on you in journalism school. The word chosen daily by moderator Anu Garg is almost always new to me, and many times my reaction is "So that's what that's called!" or "So that's what I am!" Because the words aren't always practical (will I ever use nictitate instead of wink?), I tend to forget them. But I have saved a few that I'm determined to work into conversation, including Brobdingnagian ("marked by tremendous size"), Cyrenaic ("an adherent of the doctrine that pleasure is the chief end of life"), claque ("a group hired to applaud at a performance"), footle ("to talk or act foolishly"), declivitous ("moderately steep"), imago ("an idealized mental image of another person or the self"), nidicolous ("reared for a time in a nest"), latitudinarian ("a person who is broad and liberal in standards of religious belief and conduct"), fubsy ("chubby and somewhat squat"), caterwaul ("to make the characteristic harsh cry of a rutting cat"), pasquinade ("statue in Rome on which lampoons were posted"), sinecure ("an office or position that requires little or no work"), risibility ("the ability or inclination to laugh"), cathect ("to invest with libidinal energy") and the German word that often describes my mental state, weltschmerz ("depression or apathy caused by comparison of the state of the world with an ideal state"). I'll get over it. (To subscribe, send the message "Subscribe [your name]" to wsmith@wordsmith.org. Web: http://www.wordsmith.org/awad/)

claque

imago

New Philistine

Editor Karl Wenclas kindly mailed me a copy of his dozen pages of single-spaced prose, which begins in Issue 28 with an entertaining screed about Chip's Closet Cleaner and my alleged "yuppieness." (OK, it's true, I separate my recyclables.) Mostly Karl's newsletter is about literature, whether it be novels, short stories or zines. But in the "No Frills" issue ("no toys, no artwork, no balloons"), Karl takes some time to claim that I represent a growing class of sell-out zinesters. "The zine world is being overtaken by ambitious careerists in suits," he rants. "What other conclusion can be drawn after encountering the news about Chip's Closet Cleaner, a zine put out by an apple-polishing, floor-groveling, gentrified journalist who writes articles for Playboy and American Journalism Review? According to Factsheet Five, Chip (note the preppy name) has abandoned paper altogether and puts his zine out only on floppy disk. Rampant classism at work. How is the zine world supposed to be radical when it's filled with Computerheads like floppy-disk Chip who embody everything the New Capitalist Man stands for?" Karl, I'm flattered by the attention, but don't fall off your high horse. Despite the criticism, New Philistine impressed me as an example of what all zines should be: passionate, cynical and concise. For a buck, you won't be disappointed, especially if you agree with Karl. My mom ordered 15 copies. (5440 Cass #1006, Detroit, MI 48202)

fubsy

40 Movie Clichés

ALIENS All members of alien species wear the same outfits.

ANIMALS Snakes always attack the lone woman in the group.

BOMBS Evil geniuses who build bombs are always thoughtful enough to include a visible time display.

CARS When you are alone in the back seat of the car, make sure you sit in the middle.

CHILDBIRTH Every woman uses Lamaze (pant method).

CLOTHING Whenever anyone knocks out anyone else and takes their clothes, they always fit perfectly.

COMPUTERS Any "Permission Denied" message always has an "Override Password" function. • When the power plant/missile site overheats, all the control panels explode.

CONVERSATIONS Two people will often converse while one stares out the window, with their back to the other. When an emotional point is made, the first person will turn around.

DRINKING A cup of black coffee/splash of cold water in face is enough to render the most inebriated person stone cold sober.

EVIDENCE The photograph that provides incriminating evidence is never on top of the pile.

FIGHTS If a character uses martial arts, his opponents will always face him one-to-one. Spare bad guys may dance around the fight taunting our hero, but none will engage until his predecessor has been disposed of.

GLASSES "Little girls who wear glasses in movies always tell the truth. Little boys who wear glasses in movies always lie." —Gene Siskel

HEROES The hero's best friend/partner will be killed by the bad guys three days before retirement. • After a fight, the hero will always wipe blood from the corner of his mouth with the back of his hand, then look at it. • A hero will show no pain even during the most terrific beating, yet he will wince if a women attempts to clean a facial wound.

INJURIES The hero always gets shot in the shoulder.

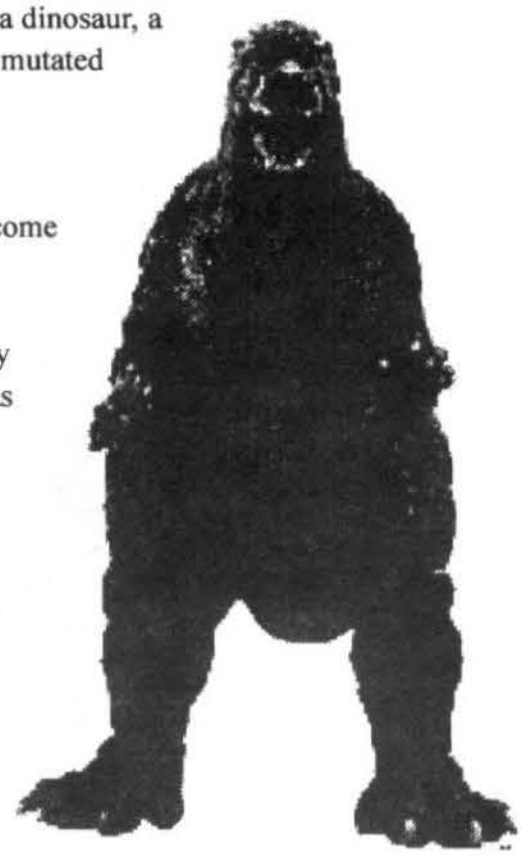
MEDICAL More often than not, the best method to revive somebody after their heart has stopped, assuming that there has already been a lengthy attempt to revive them with CPR or those electric zapper things, is screaming at them something like: "You've never backed away from anything in your life, now fight! Fight! FIII-IGHT!" or "You can't do this to me! I love you, goddammit!" [more]

G-Fan

There's something about Godzilla that warms your heart, especially if you're standing too close when he sneezes. So the Big G destroys a few major Japanese cities while taking pot shots at other monsters. So he disrupts some traffic patterns and sends a gaggle of badly dubbed scientists into a panic. He's still the King of Monsters, and don't you forget it. G-Fan editor J.D. Lee spreads the gospel of Godzilla in G-Fan six times a year with tale-of-the-tape comparisons with other mutants such as Mothra and Rodan (or King Kong or the Power Rangers) and film reviews (Japan cranks out Godzilla movies like America does action heroes). By far the most entertaining part of the zine, even if you're not a monster fan, is the letters column. "I seriously think Fire Rodan would defeat Gyaos even if he lost his ray breath," argues teen fan Robby Walsh of Washington, D.C., noting that Rodan can fly while the rat-like Gyaos can't even turn his head because he has two throats. A few paragraphs later, James Schafer of Salem, Oregon, is asking how exactly the chunky Godzilla can swim so damned fast. "The laws of physics cannot be skewed that much," he writes. Hey Jim, you questioning Godzilla, man? You seen the size of that guy lately? If he wants to swim, he'll swim. ($4 from Box 3468, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada R0A 2A0. Web: http://www.ama.caltech.edu/mrm/godzilla.html)

Five Questions About Godzilla Answered by J.D. Lee

How did Godzilla come about?
Godzilla has two origins actually. In 1954, he was supposed to be a revived type of dinosaur that was roused from an age-old sleep by H-bomb testing. In the late '80s he was given a new origin where he was a dinosaur, a Godzillasaurus who somehow survived to modern times and through exposure to radiation became mutated into the 100-meter monster that he is now.



Is Godzilla good or evil?
I would say that Godzilla can't be classified as either good or evil. In a '90s sort of way, he has become like a natural catastrophe, like a hurricane. People know he's coming and do the best they can to defend themselves but basically they wait until he passes by and then repair the damage after he's gone. I don't think anyone would classify him as an evil thing any more than anyone would classify an earthquake as being evil. Of course in the late '60s he took on the role of a superhero and he was definitely good and we even had children calling out his name when they needed help fighting off monsters like Titanisaurus and Megalon.

What's your favorite Godzilla flick?
I would go back to 1964 to "Godzilla vs. the Thing," which was the first one I saw in a movie theater. My dad took me to see it. I was a young boy at the time. It just happens that it's recognized effects-wise, story-wise and musically as one of the high points of the series. Godzilla was still sort of a deadly menace, and the suits they used were some of the best. It was just a fantastic movie. The antagonist was Mothra, of course, and her two fairy princesses.

How does Godzilla defend himself?
Well first off, Godzilla does not breath fire. He actually emits a beam of atomic heat from his mouth. A minor distinction to the layman, but it's important. He can fly, humiliatingly enough for us fans. In "Godzilla vs. the Smog Monster," he used his atomic beam as a jet propulsion unit. But that's the only time that's ever happened and the hardcore fans like to think of that scene as a bad dream. Of course Godzilla is 100 meters tall now. When he started out he was 50 meters, but he's grown over the years. Some say this is because he needs to keep up with the size increases of the buildings in Tokyo. Probably the most interesting thing about him that most people don't know is that he's not invulnerable. It's just that his cells are able to repair themselves so quickly that any injury he sustains is immediately healed.

What does he eat?
He's never been shown eating in any of the movies. In "Godzilla 1985," he did take up the core of a nuclear reactor and seemed to absorb energy from that. I've seen books that say he feeds on sea creatures but you have to wonder how a 100-meter monster possibly finds enough to eat.

Five Godzilla Match-ups, called by J.D. Lee

Mike Tyson (blown up to Godzilla size): Godzilla
King Kong (blown up): Godzilla
LAPD (regular size): Godzilla
Power Rangers (blown up): Godzilla
Superman (regular size): Godzilla
Mothra (Mothra size): Mothra in a squeaker

MIDDLE AGES Medieval peasants always have filthy faces, tangled hair, ragged clothing and perfect teeth.
MINORITIES Native Americans all have mystical knowledge.
NIGHTMARES Any person waking from a nightmare will sit bolt upright in bed.
PHONES Always knock over the phone if it wakes you up. • On the subject of phones, how about variations of the Bob Newhart-style conversation where we only get to hear one side of the discussion, as in: "Marilyn hasn't shown up at the lawyer's office yet? (pause) And you already called Bill's? (pause) What did he say? (pause) He hasn't seen her either. (pause) So, John's getting nervous? (pause) He's going to call the police?" If I'm not mistaken, the conversation must have gone like this: "Marilyn hasn't shown up at the lawyer's office yet." "Marilyn hasn't shown up at the lawyer's office yet?" "No, and I've already called Bill's." "And you already called Bill's?" "Yes." "What did he say?" "He hasn't seen her either." "He hasn't seen her either." "John's getting pretty nervous about this." "So, John's getting nervous?" "Yes, he's going to call the police." "He's going to call the police?"
RADIO & TV A character turns on the radio just in time to hear a special announcement. He or she then turns the radio off.
SEX All beds have a special L-shaped top sheet, which reaches up to armpit level on women and waist level on men. • Women who have just finished a steamy lovemaking session always lie back and pull the sheets up to their necks.
SHOPPING Every set of grocery bags contains at least one baguette sticking out of the top.
SPORTS In any sports movie, a player on the field can look up into a crowd and immediately spot their loved ones.
SWORDPLAY During a duel, the hero will jump onto a table that raises him above the villain, who will swipe at the hero's legs, which the hero avoids by jumping over the blade.
TRAFFIC When a character has to cross the street, he or she can always cross immediately. If he or she jogs across, it is in order to miss the one car that drives by after they cross.
VILLAINS No matter how dead you think you've killed a bad guy, he can still get up. Therefore, always make sure to leave his gun in or near his hand after you've killed him and you turn away to comfort the girl. • Whenever a villain has captured the hero, he will take five minutes to tell the hero every detail of his plan to rule the earth. • The bad guy, instead of simply offing the captured good guy on the spot, will devise some sort of drawn-out, fiendishly clever method of execution.
WAR You're very likely to survive any battle in any war, unless you show someone a picture of your sweetheart back home.
WEAPONS The first shot by a bad guy always misses. • When the villain runs out of bullets, he throws away his gun. • If the good guy is driving, he simply ducks a little to avoid bullets. • Shots fired at guys hiding around corners always strike the edge of the building at eye level.
WOMEN Women fight by pulling hair, falling to the ground together and rolling around.
WOOD No matter how thin, it's a safe shield against bullets.

from a list of compiled by Giancarlo Cairella located on the World Wide Web at http://www.like.it/vertigo/cliches.html

Dear Johnny: Johnny Carson's Most Hilarious & Bizarre Fan Mail

I'd love to be able to share some of the offbeat letters sent to the Playboy Advisor, but I have been forbidden. Two of Carson's mail handlers were able to tread where I could not, and after reading through their collection of letters sent to America's favorite talk show host, I'm glad I only paid three bucks for it. It's divided into 14 chapters, as if the kooks who wrote Johnny could be categorized beyond that they all have delusions. It's a sad book, in the end, devoid of the wit that Carson was known for, since it focuses on that segment of the mentally ill who naturally connect with a guy who never lets them down (for letters from crazies that are actually funny, see "Inside the Weirdo Lobby," Issue 5). What the mail clerks who compiled this book forget is that incoherent rants from wacky people may be unusual, but they usually aren't that interesting. The authors' admonition that they're not trying to exploit the letter writers doesn't ring true, especially when you consider all the snide comments they add in the margins. They also mock fans who send in letter-sized envelopes when asking for glossy photos. The nerve! "We were always tempted to take the 8 x 10 photo and fold it to fit into the small envelope, but we never did." That's about the most scintillating of the insider gossip you'll find in the book, which includes a list of form letter replies (stop the presses!) and incredible detail about how the mail was sorted, like anyone cares about The Tonight Show's interoffice routing system. And hold on to your hats: They usually got a lot more mail near Johnny's birthday! There are a few letters that are gems, like the guy who wrote to tell Johnny that he had memorized 215 jokes "and counting" or the enterprising couple who observed, "The salary from one of your shows would get us totally out of debt, including our house. How about letting us do one of your shows and getting your salary for it?" After Jimmy Stewart read a poem on-air about a dog named Beau, viewers requested copies for six years. Others would write in to report how many times Johnny touched his tie during the monologue or licked his finger to turn pages. One letter read simply, "All right, I'll swallow it," many accused Ed McMahon of lying about that $10 million jackpot, and one guy won the Gross-Out award by *enclosing his* toenail clippings. Children typically sent their favorite recipes, and one fan dutifully mailed $10 a month "rent" to "Dad." The best letters of the bunch are those that close the book, such as the family who credited Johnny with saving their lives (they were up watching TV when a fire broke out) or the loyal viewer who suggested Carson cap his final show by having a fat lady sing. "Maybe Roseanne Barr!" (Optima Books, $13)

Science Geek

Doug Larkin has joined the Peace Corps and taken off for Kenya, but during the previous two years, he taught science at his old high school in Trenton, New Jersey. If he teaches anything like he writes, he's going to whip out a bunch of Einsteins. In the second issue of Science Geek, Doug writes, "I tried my hardest not to be like those teachers I hated, boring and stuffy. I wanted my kids to love science. I love it, obviously, and to me all the other subjects: language, math, history, literature, all owe their existence to science." One lab he did was to have his students figure out which cereal stays the crunchiest in milk; when he didn't feel much like teaching, he would show reruns of "Bill Nye, The Science Guy" that a student had taped for extra credit; and four of his best students once tried to cut class by leaving a box of Cap'n Peanut Butter Crunch as a bribe. The rest of the second issue includes record reviews, band interviews, an instruction sheet from the Flinn Scientific Co. about how to use a cow eyeball and acid to demonstrate why you should wear safety goggles, a layman's guide to quantum physics and calculations to answer the question, "How random is a coin toss?" Doug also explains how he keeps a list of questions he hasn't been able to answer handy in case he stumbles across a piece of enlightenment. He discovered how traffic lights work, for instance, after a student revealed her father knew the man who invented them. In other articles, Doug draws parallels between particle accelerators and the pole vault and explains the X-Ray diffractometer and how it can be used to identify substances. When the cops on TV say, "Send it to the lab for analysis," they are thinking of the X-Ray diffractometer. I know I am. ($3 from P.O. Box 8641, Trenton, NJ 08650)

23 Songs

Concrete Blonde "God is A Bullet" (Free); "Carry Me Away" (Free); "Caroline" (Bloodletting); *Frank Zappa* "Joe's Garage" (Joe's Garage); "Catholic Girls"; *The Who* "Bell Boy" (Quadrophenia); *The Pretenders* "I Go to Sleep" (The Singles); *The Kinks* "Art Lover" (Give the People What They Want); *The Black Crowes* "Cursed Diamond"; "She Gave Good Sun-

flower"; "Descending" (Amorica); *The Rolling Stones* "The Worst" (Voodoo Lounge); *Mick Jagger* "Don't Tear Me Up"; "Hang On to Me Tonight (Wandering Spirit); *The Ventures:* "Wipe Out" (Best of); *Bob Dylan* "Meet Me in the Morning"; "Buckets of Rain" (Blood on the Tracks); *The Velvet Underground* "Rock and Roll" (Best of); *U2* "Satellite of Love" (One); *Ray Charles* "It Should've Been Me"; "Lonely Avenue"; "What I'd Say"; "Hallelujah I Love Her So" (Best of).

Bus World

Since I don't have a car, I ride public buses a lot. They're OK, but I wish the drivers wouldn't stop short. Maybe watching the passengers bounce from rail to rail as they try to regain their balance is the only thrill the drivers get. I also like the drivers who say hello when you get on and who call out the stops so I can daydream. While I'm sure few people aspire to be Ralph Kramden, Chicago bus drivers earn quite a bit ($38,000 annually after five years) and shouldn't be so grumpy. After one Saturday afternoon ride to browse among the 4,000 magazines at City Newsstand, I found myself buying a copy of Bus World. Published in California, it's written for the men and women who manage bus routes in cities around the world. It includes lots of photos of buses and very few photos of people. There's also tons of news about bus management, such as the fact that the U.S. Department of Transportation has ruled that all buses must have antilock brakes by March 1, 1999; that Washington, D.C., has banned outside bus advertising because it looks ugly; that Phoenix buses now take credit cards; that a New York gang is believed to be stealing buses to run illegal charter services; and that states can charge sales tax even on the portions of bus trips that take place outside their borders. Bus World also has the obligatory announcements from proud city officials who have taken delivery of a fleet of shiny new vehicles. In the Summer 1995 issue, one longer article reported how unlicensed van drivers "poach" commuters from the New York metro service, another recounted the history of bus service on the Isle of Man, which currently has 94 buses, and a third examined the dismal finances of D.C.'s Metrobus. The best part of the magazine, however, is the centerfold of "Bus Shots," featuring buses (including some restored antique coaches) in full color and posed in their natural habitats. All in all, a smooth ride. ($3.50 from P.O. Box 39, Woodland Hills, California 91365)

Crap Hound

It's difficult to believe that 68 pages of illustrations clipped from vintage magazines, antique children's books and out-of-date catalogs could be so mesmerizing. Maybe it's the weighty themes such as sex, death and utensils that Sean Tejaratchi arranges his discoveries around. He launched Crap Hound to provide underground publishers with stylish illustrations to spice up

their copy-heavy rants. But his mammoth "picture book of discovery and activity" works on a different level: It's just plain interesting, even without a pair of scissors and rubber cement. Not surprisingly, Sean's most popular issue (now out of print) contained hundreds of hilarious illustrations depicting sex and sexuality, including a full page of lip prints. This was followed by pages brimming with kitchen gadgets, mostly blenders and toasters. I like to think of it as his "hey baby, what's cooking" issue. An earlier Crap Hound covered death, phones and scissors; Sean's latest tackles devils, fishing bait and clowns ("I've had a lot of really bad clown dreams lately," he once told me. "It's really disturbing me."). A visual feast. ($5 from P.O. Box 40373, Portland, Oregon 97240)

Quarterly Review of Doublespeak

Published by the National Council of Teachers of English, this newsletter documents the never-ending use of creative euphemisms by politicians, public officials and other people with something to hide. The NCTE, which annually presents an Orwell Award and a Doublespeak Award that you don't want to win, divides the review into sections like Politicians, Business, Law, Medicine, Sex and Education for easy browsing. Readers submit news reports that include doublespeak, and there are plenty of examples. A Canadian military spokesman calls a helicopter crash a "departure from normal flight." The National Agricultural Chemical Association changes its name to the American Crop Protection Association. Soap dispensers become "hand cleansing systems." Logging companies no longer "bulldoze," they "access timber." O.J.'s defense team uses the term "marital discord" instead of wife-beating. The U.N. sends troops for "armed humanitarian interventions." The University of California at Berkeley now has a "department of human biodynamics" (formerly physical education). Prostitutes are "commercial sex workers." A Washington middle school calls its hallways "behavior transition corridors." Belts are made of "genuine simulated leather." The review can be overwhelming if read in one sitting, but mercifully it concludes with examples of some admirable straight talk. ($10/year from NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801)

AFA Journal

Published six times a year by the arch-conservative American Family Association, this newsletter isn't supposed to be funny. It's designed instead to point out the growing depravity of our culture and its horrific effects on our nation's innocents. Besides the predictable headlines ("Society has declined since prayer was banned from schools," "Daytime TV wallows in tawdry family perversions"), standard religious right rhetoric (including an ad hawking "Choose Life" personal checks), and advertiser boycotts, the journal documents in excruciating detail every example of profanity, sex and violence the group can find on primetime TV. You have to wonder, since the good Christian editors are largely preaching to the converted, why they find it necessary to record every second of TV depravity. Because the scenes are taken out of context, the laundry list "TV Review" section becomes more pornographic than anything you see on the shows. Take a typical entry for "Seinfeld": "This repeat episode has dialogue which focuses on the fact that the major characters have seen each other naked. Detailed descriptions of sexual organs, both male and female, are included. On October 13, a major story line features the kind of underwear Kramer wears and the effect it has on his genitals." Is it hot in here, or is it just me? A description of "The John Larroquette Show" charges that "bestiality, masturbation, cross-dressing and prostitution fill the story in this episode. On October 4, John ogles the centerfold of a porn magazine and a former prostitute proposes that she and John have a monogamous relationship. 'What does monogamous mean?' asks John. Other sleaze jokes are about masturbation, transvestites and genitalia." How about that cesspool of sin, "Friends"? "The cast of twenty-something singles spend their days lusting after others or discussing their sexual histories. On November 3, they discuss the weirdest places they've had sex. During a power outage, Rachel and a neighbor whom she's just met take advantage of the dark to begin a heavy make-out scene. They use God's name in vain a dozen times." Certainly

there's a lot of crap on TV, but you have to wonder who's more messed up: The folks who watch it, or the self-righteous twits who can't see anything but the naughty bits. ($15/year from P.O. Drawer 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803)

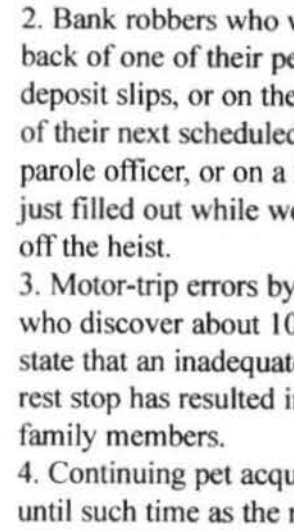
Five Weird News Items So Common They Aren't Weird Anymore

By Chuck Shepherd. For a free e-mail subscription to Chuck's weekly "News of the Weird," write notw-request@nine.org with the word "subscribe" in the subject line.

1. Images of Jesus or Mary spotted on the rusty door of an old appliance, a billboard ad for pizza, the markings on the hide of a cow or the side of a town's water tower.
2. Bank robbers who write hold-up notes on the back of one of their personalized checks or deposit slips, or on the postcard advising them of their next scheduled appointment with their parole officer, or on a loan application they've just filled out while working up the nerve to pull off the heist.
3. Motor-trip errors by Mom, Dad and the kids who discover about 100 miles down the interstate that an inadequate head count after the last rest stop has resulted in one or more missing family members.
4. Continuing pet acquisitions in small homes until such time as the neighbors begin to worry about the smell and the authorities are called in wearing gas masks in order to remove the emaciated animals and to clean the floor of feces—and after neighbors describe the home's owner as a "nice person" but a "loner."
5. Men found in shock with part or all of their genitals missing, swearing that some man-hating prostitute cut them, or that there was a serious industrial accident, or that a zipper performed improperly. Later, it is discovered that, almost always, the injury was the result of a serious masturbatory error involving household equipment of some kind.

Thrift Score

If you've ever stumbled on paint-by-numbers art that hasn't been done, a pristine copy of "CB Radio for Christians," or an intact edition of the Fritz the Cat game you played obsessively as a kid, you know the exhilaration of the thrift score. Al Hoff's zine isn't about finding bargains, but on the thrill of the chase. The pay-off is discovering abandoned consumer goods so retro and cool that your friends look on with envy but can't figure out why. In past issues, Al has quizzed her readers on the weirdest things they've ever thrifted ("It's a Purse! It's a Phone! It's a Purse that *is* a Phone!"), compiled woeful "the fish that got away" tales ("If only I'd had more room in the trunk"; "I can't believe I thought $6 was too much"), warned of safety defects in 1970s clothing; reviewed thrift stores from around the globe and offered decorating tips such as covering ugly walls with campy LP sleeves. Besides being a rocking good time, Thrift Score teaches an important lesson: Just because something gets tossed aside doesn't mean it's junk; it only needs to be loved again. Goes for people, too. ($2 from P.O. Box 90282, Pittsburgh, PA 15224)



Pills-a-go-go

Jim Hogshire loves pills. They're colorful, bite-size and effective. They're also so common that most people take them for granted. To remedy that, Hogshire packs PaGG with information and anecdotes about the tablets, capsules, syrups, powders, extracts, tinctures and elixirs that soothe our aches, clear our passages, put us to sleep, keep us awake and help us forget. You'd be hard-pressed to find anyone in North America who hasn't popped a pill for some reason. That massive consumption fuels a $70 billion domestic pharmaceutical industry—and PaGG. Besides reporting on the latest research and government regulation, Hogshire chronicles strange pill criminals (inept smugglers, mostly), explains the science behind the headlines, archives pop culture pill references, unveils hidden side effects, and conducts goofy don't-try-this-at-home experiments such as the effects of drinking an entire bottle of cough syrup in one sitting ("I basically felt transformed into a reptilian version of myself"). Best of all, PaGG is available without a prescription. ($2 from 1202 E. Pike St., #849, Seattle, WA 98122)

78 Mom Sayings

1. I've had it up to here with you.
2. You'll be treated like an adult when you act like an adult.
3. Why can't you be nice?
4. You don't want me to come up there.
5. Two wrongs don't make a right.
6. I'll give you something to cry about.
7. You come back here this instant!
8. Where did you learn to talk like that?
9. Wipe your nose.
10. It all winds up in the same place.
11. If it didn't taste bad, it wouldn't be medicine.
12. The more you scratch it, the more it's going to itch.
13. Because I'm the mom.
14. Weren't you even listening?
15. Just because, that's why.
16. You're not going out like that.
17. Over my dead body.
18. Get off the phone.
19. We'll get there when we get there.
20. Get that thing out of here.
21. Have you been smoking?
22. I won't have that kind of talk in this house.
23. Go to your room.
24. You had your chance.
25. Tie your shoes.
26. Pick up your clothes.
27. You kids don't know how good you have it.
28. Eat your vegetables.
29. Hurry up or you'll miss the bus.
30. Where do you think you're going?
31. Up and at 'em.
32. Stop picking on your sister.
33. Where were you born, in a barn?
34. Think of all the starving children in Africa.
35. I don't care who started it.
36. I've taken all I'm going to take from you.
37. Is your homework done?
38. Go ask your father.
39. Don't let that dog up on the couch.
40. Stop acting silly.
41. It's your turn to set the table.
42. Not before dinner.
43. Comb your hair.
44. Watch your mouth.
45. How many times do I have to tell you?
46. Just wait until your father gets home.
47. Don't slam the door.
48. Wipe your feet.
49. Is that any way to speak to your mother?
50. This hurts me more than it hurts you.
51. You had me worried sick.
52. After all I've done for you, this is the thanks I get?
53. If you don't know, I'm not going tell you.
54. You'll sit there until I say you can leave.
55. Take out the garbage.
56. I'm only doing this for your own good.
57. There are plenty of fish in the sea.
58. If somebody else's mother lets them jump off a bridge, would you want me to let you too?
59. Careful what you wish for, you might get it.
60. Did you wash your hands?
61. If I had talked to your grandmother the way you talk to me...
62. I'm not asking you—I'm telling you.
63. Don't ask me why. The answer is no.
64. You don't have to like me. I'm your mother.
65. This is not a hotel.
66. You have an answer for everything, don't you?
67. If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.
68. So it's raining? You're not sugar—you won't melt.
69. Make your bed.
70. Are you wearing clean underwear?
71. Put that down! You don't know where it's been!
72. Don't take candy from strangers.
73. If you don't stop you'll freeze that way.
74. Don't sit so close to the television, it'll ruin your eyes.
75. Is that a threat or a promise?
76. You're running away? I'll pack a lunch.
77. Well, excuse me for living.
78. Sit up straight.

The Last Prom

In his first issue, Ralph Coon outlines the history of the gruesome films you saw during driver's education class that scared you into driving

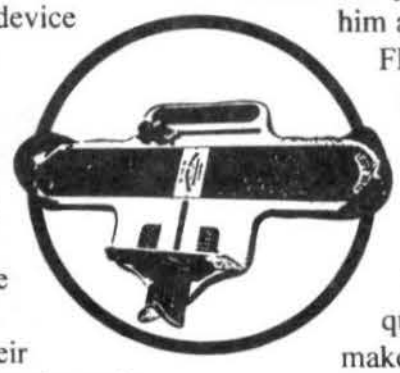
about 10 mph. He even tracks down Earl Deems, 71, who made 19 of the bloodfests (among them "Mechanized Death," "Wheels of Tragedy" and "Highway of Agony") and quizzes the Ohio retiree about his technique. The film I remember from my formative driving days was "Red Asphalt," produced by the California Highway Patrol, and Coon ferrets out the genius behind that as well (no, it wasn't Erik Estrada). In the most famous driver-death movie of all time, "The Last Prom," a reckless teen plows into a tree and kills his date. "A good boy," says the narrator, "but a bad driver." ($3 from 120 S. San Fernando Blvd., #243, Burbank, CA 91502)

Dishwasher

Pete Jordan has a mission: Wash dishes in all 50 states. Issue #7 finds Pete at a cafe in Boulder, #8 at an Alaskan fish cannery, #9 at a seafood restaurant in New Hampshire, and #11 at restaurants in Montana, California and Ohio (#10 was a special comics issue). The reason you'll like Pete is that he has a good attitude, and a sense of humor. "Why is there this assumption that dishwashers are at the bottom rung of some sort of career-climbing ladder?" he asks. Writing in a tight, neat scrawl (with no water marks), he lists dishwashing references he finds in novels, describes the wacky people he meets (including a group of priests he stumbled upon as they watched a porn video) and details the mundane ways he kills time. After reading Pete's adventures, I'm as convinced as ever that a clean plate is like a clean soul—you can see yourself in it. ($1 from P.O. Box 8213, Portland, OR 97207)

Beer Frame

Paul Lukas isn't interested in the hippest, hottest or latest. He wants ordinary, and he uncovers it everywhere in the nooks and crannies of consumer culture. Among other everyday artifacts, Paul has reviewed the Score-King 50 controlled-weight bowling pin by Brunswick, 666 Cold Preparation with Quinine by the Monticello Drug Co. and "The Enemy Wind," a video of tornado destruction compiled by the Weather Channel. One of his favorite recent finds is the Brannock Device, that shiny chrome contraption used to measure your feet in shoe stores (Paul wears a 9D). Although Beer Frame christens it "a perfect combination of the industrial and the aesthetic," the New York firm that manufactures the device doesn't want any ordinary biped owning one: You have to prove you're a shoe salesman (Paul wiggled around this restriction admirably and now measures his feet *whenever he wants*). Other products, such as sauerkraut juice (as in extract of fermented cabbage), are more mysterious in their appeal. Although even the people who make kraut juice won't get near it, enough fans guzzle cans of the putrid liquid to provide a market for no less than seven varieties. Apparently, it's a killer laxative. ($2 to 160 St. John's Place, Brooklyn, NY 11217)



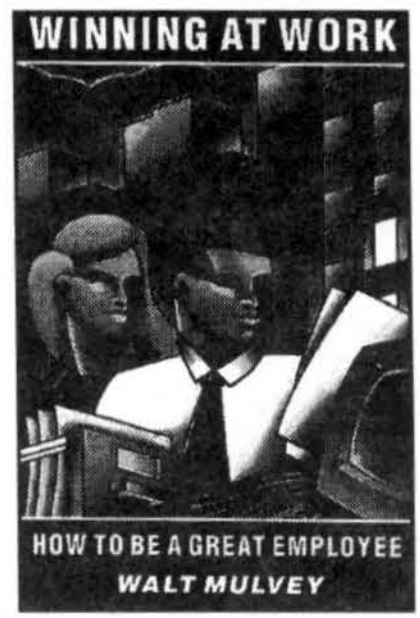
The Reader's Bill of Rights

from "Better Than Life"

01. The right to not read.
02. The right to skip pages.
03. The right to not finish a book.
04. The right to re-read.
05. The right to read anything.
06. The right to escapism.
07. The right to read anywhere.
08. The right to browse.
09. The right to read aloud.
10. The right to not defend your tastes.

Winning at Work: How to Be a Great Employee

This book is offensive in a mild-mannered way. Writing it was a "dream-come-true" for author Walt Mulvey, a "businessman and entrepreneur" (i.e. his own boss) who asked around and found out that no one had ever seen a book written about how to be a superenthusiastic peon. Imagine that. Walt starts out by explaining how to tell if you're an employee: "You are an employee if you are not a boss." Walt then explains that great employees have goals, priorities and ambitions, they don't get involved in office politics, and if they're up for a promotion that goes to someone else, they feel happy for that person and support them in their work. You can ask your boss nicely why you weren't promoted and then "work to improve your skills." Walt recalls how he had one employee who didn't have a Positive Mental Attitude. So Walt ordered the man to clip five happy newspaper articles every day. By the end of the month the employee was racking up big sales. At another company Walt worked at, when things looked bleak someone would say, "Terrific." And then everybody around them would repeat "Terrific!" three times. Then everyone would feel better. Chapter 6 of Walt's book is called "Be a Boss Booster!" If your boss is not qualified for his position, don't call him an SOB, Walt says. Call him a FHB, or *fallible human being*. Also, don't criticize your boss. Instead, always anticipate his needs, like Radar did on M*A*S*H whenever Colonel Potter was feeling cranky. To drive his point home, Walt includes an entire chapter of quotes from CEOs about what makes a great employee. Naturally, great employees go that extra mile, "forget about the clock," and devote their talents and energies to making the company buttloads of money. Finally, Walt provides his home phone number (503-697-7707) for any potential great employee who "would like to discuss a challenge or problem you have at work. You will always have a willing listener." Uh, hello, Walt? Yeah, I just got laid off after 21 years at the same company the same day the CEO took a $5 million bonus. Any words of wisdom? (Hara Publishing, $10)



Murder Can Be Fun

John Marr has a knack for writing about the B-side of popular culture. He spends hours researching natural disasters such as the Great Boston Molasses Flood of 1919, lesser-known perverts such as Sylvestre Matuschka, who got off blowing up passenger trains, and murderers with particularly garish modi operandi. My fave is the cover story for Issue 13, "Death at Disneyland," although John's most recent issue, "Zoo Deaths," comes in a close second. For the Disney story, John searched through dozens of yellowing newspapers and books with an eye for tabloid details. The result: An alternately bone-chilling and hilarious rundown of the people who have been killed in accidents at the park. You know, stircrazy daredevils falling off Space Mountain, foolhardy teenagers drowning in the Adventureland moat, a young worker crushed to death in the rotating "America Sings" exhibit. John gives the same treatment to zoos in Issue 16, teaching by way of several horrifying examples that polar bears are not warm and cuddly when you climb into their cages drunk in the middle of the night. ($2 from P.O. Box 640111, San Francisco, CA 94109) Ask at your favorite comic store for a copy of Slave Labor's "Murder Can Be Fun" comics which include John's best stuff illustrated by a variety of talented underground artists. ($2.95; phone 800-866-8929 for a catalog)

The Buck in the Field

This zine of "Midwest factory tales and the lore of the drunken denizens" is an overlooked gem that leaves you wondering how such talented folks don't get more recognition. Tyler Starr provides "an account of the various individuals who I met while working in several factories and what they said as we tried to entertain ourselves." The booklet, bound with sewing thread, includes great sketches and writing. I loved his "Jobs Tyler Still Remembers" chart in which he gave the locale of the job, his title and the nickname his co-workers gave him ("Warehouse Point, CT—prison shelf builder—Hate You Temps"). In one drawing, Tyler outlines the route he and co-worker Gary took while racing pallet jacks when they weren't scraping the bot-

tom of cinnamon barrels. He also describes Gary's "history with the law" and quotes some eloquent ramblings by colleagues about the challenges of their lives. The ink drawings are what make this zine stand out—the sketch work captures the essence of the writing. ($1 from 55 Horizon Circle, South Windsor, CT 06074)

Milkcrate Digest

Who hasn't owned a milkcrate? I had one until I sold the last of my LPs to a bunch of summer campers. Even without milk, milkcrates can be very utilitarian. With his innovative zine, John Freeborn fulfills his promise to "find new functions for milkcrates that you never imagined, new ways to play with milkcrates, and new ways to see the beauty and style that few recognize. Let's just face it: Milkcrates are the best and they are free." The zine is stuffed with photos of milkcrates ("Theft of This Milkcrate is a Crime"), ideas for building with milkcrates, everyday uses for milkcrates (cereal bowl, checkers table, chair, bar, basketball net, fencing helmet, condom). The first issue also includes a pop-up milkcrate like those crazy kids' books used to have, and issue two has a special supplement: Milkcrate Sports Illustrated! Read it while eating Oreos. ($2 from P.O. Box 1412, Providence, RI 02901)

Subway Surfer

I like the style of this zine—you can read it without holding on. Subway surfers are young dudes who ride the subway—in this case, in New York—and attempt to remain standing through all the bumps and curves and jerky stops without clutching any supports. The zine is filled with photos of surfers in action, as well as tips and admonishments to "listen and you can hear the subway speak to you. Hear the gleaming steel cars blow out of the tunnel, when the steamy, pissy air vents your hair. Listen to the scream. The roar. The skreeeech. The thumping of the loose rail. Don't cover your ears: Embrace the power of the IRT and do it justice." There's also discussion about which cars and lines are the best to surf ("Warm up on the 7. Hardcore surfing on the 2 express"). Unfortunately, the last cash I sent didn't bring no zine, so you're taking your chances if you order. ($1.25 or a token and a stamp from 100 W. 92nd, Apt 24F, New York, NY 10025)

10 Questions That Might Offend You

You'd be hard-pressed to find anyone these days who hasn't taken offense at something a neighbor, co-worker, writer, artist, celebrity, politician or stranger has said or done. To measure the limits of your sensibilities, consider each of these scientifically formulated questions, then mark your response and tally your score.

1. You and a friend attend a show by performance artist Karen Finley. During the show, Finley strips naked, fills a plastic bag with egg yolks and glitter, then uses a teddy bear to spread the concoction over her entire body. How do you react?
a. You look at the table self-consciously when Finley takes her clothes off.
b. You stand up, throw down your napkin, and walk out.
c. You order an omelet.

2. While surfing the Internet, you discover an archive of sexually explicit photos. What do you do?
a. You call your online service provider and express concern.
b. You write your Congressman, demanding he "protect the children."
c. You upload a photo of yourself butt naked.

3. Which of the following blasphemies do you find most offensive?
a. A bystander muttering, "Mary, Mother of God" after seeing a traffic accident.
b. A detective yelling "Goddammit!" on a television drama show.
c. The line for the bathroom during the Pope's visit to New York.

4. You hear that an exhibit of Robert Mapplethorpe photos will be at a local gallery. What is your response?
a. You contact your church to find out what you can do to shut down the exhibit.
b. You worry that children who see the photos will consider a homosexual lifestyle.
c. You realize you've missed the exhibit of flowers made from dried macaroni.

5. You monitor a high school sexual education course. During the class, the teacher discusses masturbation. What is your response?
a. You gasp and shake your finger in disapproval.
b. Outraged, you call for the teacher's dismissal.
c. You take your hands out of your pockets.

6. During the same course, the instructor places a condom over a banana. What is your response?
a. You shield your eyes.
b. You ask that the students leave the room.
c. You think to yourself, "That must keep it really fresh."

7. A woman who works with you makes a joke about your balding. What is your response?
a. You complain to a supervisor that you are being harassed.
b. You file a grievance with the EEOC.
c. You respond, "At least my tits aren't sagging."

8. A co-worker begins to tell a dirty joke. What do you do?
a. You suggest that such material is inappropriate for the workplace.
b. You suggest he will burn in Hell.
c. You say, "Yeah, I saw that in Hustler too."

9. Of the following, which do you find the most offensive?
a. A desecrated American flag.
b. A portrait of Christ in urine.
c. Rush Limbaugh in a thong.

10. Now that you've completed this short quiz, which of the following statements best reflects your current mindset?
a. I am calm and relaxed.
b. I support a Constitutional amendment giving people the right not to be offended.
c. You can all just go to hell.

Scoring:
Give yourself 1 point for each (a) answer you marked, 5 points for each (b) and 10 points for each (c).
- If you scored less than 25 points: You have an acute and paralyzing sensibility.
- If you scored 30 to 70 points: Like many Americans, you are confused as to whether you are offended or simply disgusted.
- If you scored more than 70 points: You are not offended by anything. What's your problem?

God's Quiet Voice: John's Dilemma

This is a cheesy comic book published by the American Family Association, the same would-be censors who bring you the AFA Journal (see page 55). Drawn by Chuck McIntosh, whose work looks as if he just graduated from one of those "So You Want to Be a Cartoonist" mail courses, it tells the tale of John Wright, a teenager who is confronted one day by the evils of nudie magazines. John and his buddy Neal find a magazine called "Girls" in a neighbor's trash. Neal's response is the all-natural "Whoa! Check this out!," while John hears a tiny voice in his head that anyone but a fundamentalist Christian would consider a sign of mental illness. It's supposed to be God speaking directly to John, telling him, "Don't look at this." After the kids on the bus tease John for not wanting to see the nekked ladies, the voice tells him to talk to someone about his problem (in the next panel, like an automaton, he says aloud, "I need to talk to someone about this"). His pastor is the natural choice, and he advises the confused young man to "make the Godly choice. Jesus would have been upset if you had looked at that magazine." John gets the point and saves his soul by proclaiming "I don't want to do anything to upset Jesus, 'cause he died on the cross to forgive me of my sins!" God's quiet voice then tells John to ask Reverend Sam about TV and movies. "Is watching TV shows with bad parts in them the same as looking at magazines with bad pictures in them?" Reverend Sam explains that it is, then sends John off with the blessing, "May the Lord protect you from all that bad stuff, John." That night, John and his parents are watching TV when John chimes in, "Are we gonna watch this show, Dad? I saw a commercial for it and it has dirty parts in it." Pop responds by clicking off the TV and telling his son, "No! We aren't! I

don't think Jesus would like that, do you John?" They all decide to invite John's buddy Neal over for some Bible reading (won't Neal be excited? If I were drawing this comic, Neal would ask, "Can I bring my magazine?"). The comic ends with a contract for students to sign: "I promise not to look at dirty magazines or watch dirty shows on television because God's Quiet Voice tells me it is wrong." Hey kids: You sure as hell shouldn't be reading Chip's Closet Cleaner. And that's not God's voice, that's the voice of repression. It will fuck you up much more than peeking at Playboy. I feel sorry for the many teens who will someday have the urge to masturbate or explore their sexuality and feel more anguish than any time in their lives because they've gotten the idea that it's all sinful and "dirty." This simplistic tale is an amazing example of twisted Christian propaganda that's worth having in your collection. ($2 from AFA, P.O. Drawer 24440, Tupelo, MS 38803)

Pathetic Life

Doug Holland calls his zine, which he launched in 1994, the "diary of a fat slob." He describes himself as "unskilled, uneducated and unkempt, with missing teeth, scraggly beard, old clothes and bad manners," and he survives at $5 an hour doing odd jobs. He chose the name for his zine from something an ex-girlfriend said to him, "You've got no money, no friends, you live in a slum, you never do anything interesting and you're too damn fat to have sex. Your life is pathetic." In his lengthy diary entries, he describes his life in detail, and it's fascinating. Nothing much happens, but that's a nice change of pace for most of us. Doug talks about the shit he has to take from people, the trials of moving, his obnoxious (former) roommate, and the general housekeeping of life that can easily bring any of us down. He describes his family and an aggravating visit from his mother. After reading an issue, you feel like this is a decent guy. As with any compelling writing, Doug provides tons of detail about the people he meets, the hassles of making a meager living, his laid-back reaction to almost everything. He loves movies and zines, so you get lots of great reviews. At the end of each issue, he includes the "Cast of Characters" so you can keep track of everyone. I can think of many people whose lives are more pathetic than Doug's—they just don't realize it. ($3 cash from 537 Jones St. #2386, San Francisco, CA 94102)

Ballast Quarterly Review

A nifty back pocket stuffer. Ballast stands for Books Art Language Logic Ambiguity Science and Teaching. It's "chiefly a pastiche of astonishing passages from books, magazines, diaries and other publications. It's a journal devoted to wit, the contents of which are intended to be insightful, amusing or thought-provoking." With an emphasis on architecture and design, the Review is well worth the five stamps that Editor Roy Behrens asks for each issue. He has done the zine for more than a decade, and it's freshly designed and fun to look at. It includes reviews of esoteric books, as well as great quotes and anecdotes taken from the biographies of relatively obscure people. I occasionally send for a copy when I need a dose of wisdom. One tidbit I marked from a recent issue: "Like to design type. Like to jiggle type around and see what comes out. Like to design ornament. Like paper. Like ink on paper. Like bright colors. Handicapped by clock."—W.A. Dwiggins, American typographer and illustrator, in "Typographic Milestones." Order a sample copy and you'll be hooked. (2022 X Avenue, Dysart, IA 52224)

Six Videos With A Touch of Despair

1. *City Lights:* Chaplin's 1931 masterpiece. The Little Tramp demonstrates the humor and pathos of urban life and love without uttering a word.
2. *The Human Factor:* Directed by Otto Preminger with a script by Tom Stoppard, this tale of espionage is held in check by doses of British reserve. The finale will appeal to anyone weary of sappy romantic endings.
3. *Dark Star:* John Carpenter's 1974 dark comedy about astronauts on a mission to destroy unstable planets pays tribute to Dr. Strangelove when the crew discovers a computerized bomb that wants to argue instead of deploy.
4. *Jackson County Jail:* Tommy Lee Jones is on the lam after busting out of jail with rape victim Yvette Mimieux. The chase scene through a Bicentennial parade shows future filmmakers how it should be done, and who can forget Jones' classic line, "I'll play what I'm dealt"?
5. *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory:* This colorful childhood fantasy, reconsidered through adult eyes, transforms Gene Wilder's Wonka into a sinister headcase. Do curious kids really deserve the treatment they get from the evil candymeister? The Oompa Loompas, however, remain delightful.
6. *The Planet of the Apes:* Don't bet your bananas that Oliver Stone's forthcoming tribute to this Charlton Heston classic will be nearly as campy, badly acted or foreboding.

Kreature Comforts

One of these days I'm going to spend some time in Memphis, and when I do, I'm taking this "Lowlife Guide to Memphis" with me. "Memphis is not something you just see or hear," writes James Dickinson of the Shangri-La Record Store, who wrote the guide. "You feel Memphis. Walk around downtown and let it soak up through your feet. Eat some Bar-B-Q. Put some gin in your glass. Sit back and let it happen. But keep one eye open. Don't let it get you. In the words of the late, great Charley Freeman, 'They don't call it Bluff City for nothing!' " You get the city history, background on movies that have been filmed in Memphis and a map of famous sites in musical history. Like any good travel guide, it makes you hungry. ($3 from 1916 Madison Avenue, Memphis, TN 38104)

The Rational Inquirer

Much like the "Stumpers" discussion group on the Internet, which I joined for a while to find out the origins of birthday spankings, the Inquirer is filled with questions and attempts at answers about a variety of non-essential topics. You get some real doosies, such as "Is invisibility possible?" "Why are toilet seats shaped like they are?" "Does a reasonably effective fly trap exist?" "In Wendy's, I asked for a small iced tea. The cashier said, 'I'm sorry, we only have two sizes, medium and large.' How can the smaller of two sizes be called a medium?" "How did coleslaw get its name?" "One of the eight reindeers who pulls Santa's sleigh has been called Donner or Donder. Which is correct?" "Why are Cliff's Notes black and gold?" and even "How did Beavis and Butt-head meet?" The questions are usually fascinating, but the answers tend to be non-committal. You're not hearing from the experts, after all—just a bunch of confused nits like yourself who submit off-the-cuff theories ("It seems to me...."). Still, it's fun as an exercise in community thinking, and unless you're boning up for the LSAT, who cares if the answers aren't definitive? ($1 plus stamp from 33 Gaymor Lane, Commack, NY 11725)

TV Grind

Dean Williams' zine examines TV culture. His first issue includes the thought-provoking "Why I Like Television Racists and Retards" ("If it wasn't supposed to be funny, why did they name him Corky?" Dean asks). There's also "The Truth About Fonzie and Mrs. C.," a detailed analysis of the secret but obvious sexual chemistry between the two. But my favorite item is the Viewmaster reel photo reproduced in color on the back cover. It's a publicity shot from "Bonanza" in which the cast members are all furtively flipping the bird. ($3 from P.O. Box 14043, Chicago, IL 60614. Web: http://www.suba.com/~tvgrind)

What Makes Pornography "Sexy"?

John Stoltenberg is the cofounder of a group called Men Against Pornography (is that like Women Against Shopping?) and holds higher

degrees in divinity and fine arts. This thin paperback describes an exercise he invented that combines his interest in God and theatrics. After hearing a presentation ten years ago by Women Against Pornography, Stoltenberg decided to create "The Pose Workshop" for men attending Christian retreats and similar conventions. As he tells it here, he first offers the briefest of introductions, selects five or six men to come forward, then asks them to duplicate the pose of a model from Playboy, Penthouse or Hustler. The poses, of course, are ridiculous and uncomfortable. The (clothed) men are "coached" by others in the room to get the pose picture perfect, including what Stoltenberg considers the obligatory "distance look" in the eyes. After the poses are completed, the guys all discuss how they felt, how they feel about porn, what they learned, etc. Besides giving general instructions about how the workshop is conducted (the word "pornography" is banned, for instance, since it might dilute the discussion with talk of what the word actually means), Stoltenberg describes some of the problems that arise, including "mirror imaging" (the poser reflects the photograph to the group, instead of matching it), "loners" (men who exhibit "private anger or distress") and, worst of all, "panderers" (men who enjoy the posing and take a "First Amendment fundamentalism" or "gay-lib chauvinism" stance in discussions). The point, as Stoltenberg explains it, is to rise above "intellectual and argumentative defenses about pornography" (otherwise known as "not thinking") and "understand that pornography exploits women's sexuality and manipulates men's" (what planet do you live on, John? *Everything* manipulates men's sexuality). Call me jaded, but all I see here is a call for better erotica, where the women are posed more naturally. Also, I see six unsuspecting men being pressured to humiliate themselves and feel ashamed about their sexuality. If you need a definition of pornography, that's mine. (Milkweed Editions, $4.95)

Verbivore

The second issue of Jeremy Braddock's zine of "cultural criticism for youth power" focuses on Los Angeles, but its highlight is an interview with Rollen Stewart, the guy who gained fame by wearing a rainbow wig and holding up a "John 3:16" placard at televised sporting events. Seems Rollen ran into a bit of trouble and was sentenced to three life terms on charges of kidnapping and making terrorist threats. "The Brief History of Los Angeles" was also interesting, as were the recollections of a guy who worked for two years in an Edinburgh pub. ($3 from 532 La Guardia Place #573, New York, NY 10012)

Balloon Animals

Just when you thought you'd seen it all, along comes this "community oriented zine for latex fetishists with specific interest in balloons and inflatables." The erotica inside centers on going to the carnival and winning balloons, talking unicorn dolls that are balloons, pool toys and lots of bubbles. One story in issue 2 describes in great detail a guy getting blown. Blown up, that is—he plays the balloon for a change. We can only imagine what sort of childhood trauma attaches this fetish to someone's Id. ($2 from P.O. Box 8533, Silver Spring, MD 20907-8533)

Eight Ideas to Help Your Vending Business

from Galaxy Sales, a gumball machine distributor in Minnesota

1. Always keep your machines looking their best.
2. Diversify. Try some Microbytes or Thunderbolt gum.
3. Never stop looking for good locations.
4. Don't let your enthusiasm carry over into bragging about your business. If you are good, they will know it and you won't need to brag.
5. Never let a door stay shut if you are told "no" at a location.
6. Ask the location manager how you can improve service, but don't be a nuisance. They do have other responsibilities beyond making sure that the bubble gum machine makes money.
7. If you are having a hard time getting locations, then pay for them. Give the owner $25 or $50 to place your machine.
8. Cash is king. Pay the owner or manager in cash—quarters if they want.

Edna's Edibles

Sarah Manvel reads pop culture trash so you don't have to. You get summaries and critiques of classics like "Is Your Volkswagen a Sex Symbol?" (1972), "Welcome Back, Kotter: The Sweathog Newshawks" (1976) and "The Passionate Witch" (1941), which Sarah loved. She ends the issue with the best quotes from each book, such as "He looked up at Kotter again. 'Do you think you could get us a new typewriter?,' he said. 'The e key on this one sticks.' 'N v r!' Kotter replied, storming out of the room." ($2 from 1905 Sands Drive, Annapolis, MD 21401)

Global Mail

Ashley moved to San Francisco, so we miss her here in Chicago, but at least she hasn't written to tell us how nice the weather is. Global Mail is a "hole to the underground" designed to bring together artists, writers and creative types to network and trade art, letters or zines. Published quarterly, it's organized by sections such as Mail Art, Ad Swaps, Archives, Dreams, Events, Exchanges, Pen Pals, Postcards, Tapes, Text, Zines and a new addition, Web Sites. So why not send Sean of Huntington, West Virginia "unused keys to unused locks" for his art project? Why not order "a catalog of X-rated rubber stamps"? Why not trade "inner vision postcards for a picture of God"? Why not save "grocery receipts from your trip to the grocery store on December 31, 1996" so Joy Johnson can assemble them? Why not write "a description of Robinson Crusoe's dog and its life" for Pat Collins of Middlesex, England? Why not mail Squim of Salt Lake City "a list of 22 crazy, stupid, constructive or destructive things to do so I can schedule them on my calendar and attempt to do at least half of the 484 possible things that I will receive"? Why not drop your favorite book and $10 in the mail to a struggling musician and let her read the book, write a song about it and send you a cassette? Why not help out Franc Borjas, who is "looking for clean healthy women (of red hair preferably) who would help me in attaining enough anal and pubic hair to braid a small ring around the perforation of my nasal septum"? OK, that's enough. Even if you never lick a stamp, Global Mail is too cool. ($3 from P.O. Box 410837, San Francisco, CA 94141. Web: http://www.well.com/user/soapbox/eglob95.html)

Four Pornographic Tributes to Hollywood Films and Their Plots

The Flintbones: Pebbles has sex with Bamm-Bamm. Wilma has sex with Betty. Fred and Fred's boss have sex with Fred's fairy godmother. Fred and Barney have sex with Betty. Fred has sex with Wilma.

A League of Their Moan: Fan has sex with player. Fan has sex with another player. Coach has sex with a reporter. Female player has sex with a female player. Male player has sex with a female player.

Taylor Wayne's World: Cable show host has sex with co-host, producer has sex with female guests, cameraman has sex with host, producer has sex with host, guest has sex with co-host, network exec has sex with guest.

The Boobyguard: Celebrity has sex with manager. Security man hired to protect celebrity's boobs has sex with paparazzi. Maid has sex with paparazzi. Manager has sex with paparazzi. Celebrity has sex with security man.

Mazeltov Cocktail

This zine is written for Jewish punks. You don't have to be a particular kind of Jew or a particular kind of punk. You don't even have to be either to enjoy it, since I'm not but I did. You get funny essays about "The Bar Mitzvah Business," Haikus for Jews ("My foreskin is gone, I don't remember having one; I'm glad—they look bad"), how to curse in Yiddish (gay kockn of dem Yam!), Famous Entertaining Jews, including Paul Stanley (nee Eisen) of

KISS, the son of Al Eisen, inventor of the 2000 Flushes Blue Toilet Bowl Cleaner, an interview with a controversial rabbi, a report on Jew punks in Israel, Canada, Australia and Mexico, recipes for Killer Kugel and other Jewish treats and a helpful glossary for gentiles who want to follow along. ($2 from P.O. Box 250402, New York, NY 10025)

10 Things About Happiness

1. Smiling can improve your mood. When you smile, you draw more air through your nose and restrict blood vessels in your face. This cools the sinuses, which cools the blood flowing through the hypothalamus, the part of the brain that controls emotions. Scientists believe the smile may have evolved from early primates who grinned as a sign of submission or to tell predators: "I'm harmless."
2. Research with twins has shown that unhappiness may be hereditary. But in one study, students were asked to select some of their favorite activities and increase those pleasures for a month. Predictably, they reported feeling happier. A similar study at the University of Southern California found that people who introduced novel activities to their lives were happier than those who just plodded along.
3. The Irish consistently report themselves as the world's happiest people.
4. There is a link between mood and the day of the week, but it's not as clear as "Blue Monday" or "TGIF." According to one study, people feel happier on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays than they do on Sundays, Mondays, and Tuesdays. (Wednesday is neutral).
5. Despite the idea of "holiday blues," most Americans consider December the happiest month of the year, followed by July. (February is the most miserable.) December is also the least popular month for suicides (the most popular: April), and mental hospital admissions peak in summer rather than winter.
6. "Happy Birthday to You," the four-line ditty written in 1893 by two sisters, generates $1 million in annual royalties for Warner-Chappell Music, Inc., which owns the rights. You don't need permission to sing it at a party, since "private use" is OK. And you can hum the tune since only the lyrics are protected.
7. Studies have found that communities where everyone earns about the same are happier than those where some people make more.
8. Most couples report a high degree of happiness in their first years of marriage, a steep decline between the third and fifth years, then a slight rebound between the sixth and eighth years. After low points before the second decade and 25th anniversary, there's a happy ending: after 40 years couples report being as happy as the newlyweds.
8. While pessimists regard bad events as "internal" ("it's all my fault"), "stable" ("it'll last forever") and "global "("it'll affect all I do"), optimists explain them as "outside" their control ("it's the job market"), "unstable" ("things will get better") and "limited" ("everything else is great").
9. Robert Frost believed "happiness makes up in height for what it lacks in length." But research indicates that frequency is better than intensity. Psychologist Ed Diener says that many people who feel infrequent but intense joy often suffer through heavy downers. Happiness, like everything, is best in moderation.
10. Recent research on Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) confirms the depressing effect that short, dark or cloudy days have on people. But a researcher at the Max Planck Institute in Germany found that the happiest people don't pay attention to the weather.

Researched and written for a magazine that never ran the piece. I was not happy.

The Food Insects Newsletter

Published by the Department of Entomology at the University of Wisconsin, this crunchy newsletter discusses the art and science of eating bugs. Millions of people do—lots of protein—and here they share recipes. The newsletter covers such topics as bug eating in Uganda, methods of cooking stick insects, a case study of an allergic reaction to grasshopper, an article about efforts to save the delicate mopane worm in South Africa, and a report from the second annual Mosquito Cook-Off in Arkansas, where Larry Clifford took top honors for his mosquito cookies. "The recipe calls for crushing the live insects lightly to keep them from flying, then pouring a mixture of brown sugar and syrup over them before boiling," the newsletter reports. "The boiling seasons the critters and rids them of bacteria. The batch is then dried and cut into small chips to be added to regular cookie dough. 'It tasted good,' said Randy Cross, 20, of Walcott. 'You couldn't taste the mosquitoes at all.' " A Charles Garth of New York also makes a call for recipes in which insects, worms or snails are the featured ingredient. The only problem I see with eating insects is that they're hard to catch while I'm watching TV. ($5 from Department of Entomology, 324 Leon Johnson Hall, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717)

10 Cheerleading Gripes

from American Cheerleader

1. My parents don't take my cheerleading seriously.
2. Classmates don't respect me/make fun of me.
3. People think I'm a ditz.
4. Teachers don't respect me and don't give me the same breaks they give to members of athletic teams.
5. Some guys want to date cheerleaders just to boost their own egos.
6. We are always last on the list to use school facilities so we're stuck with the worst equipment and practice times.
7. We don't always have a "real" coach.
8. We don't get enough funding from our schools; we have to pay for everything ourselves or hold fund-raisers to raise the money for our expenses.
9. Sometimes girls on sports teams resent us.
10. Every movie about teenagers seems to have a dumb cheerleader in it.

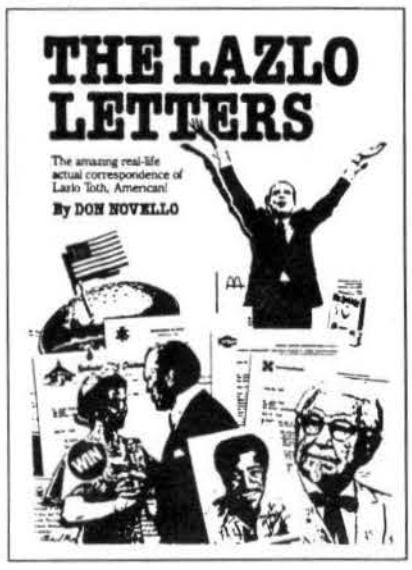
Colors

This is one of my favorite magazines. It's printed on beautiful paper in rich colors, it's bilingual, it has a global perspective, it's informative and the photographs are stunning. A lot of people have criticized Benetton for using controversial images to sell their clothes, but you have to admit they do support some compelling journalism. What other magazine would illustrate an issue about war with a full-page color photo of the bloody stumps of a newly created mine victim? You see the blood, you see the bone, you realize exactly what a mine can do to a person. Each issue of the magazine features a theme, which is then explored by interviewing people around the world. One early issue dealt with AIDS and included a computer image of Ronald Reagan with sores covering his face. An accompanying tongue-in-cheek editorial lauded Reagan, who it said had recently died of AIDS, for his lifelong devotion to battling the disease. More recent issues have covered "heaven" and "war," and one issue contained no words, just photos. It's just a beautiful magazine to look at. The heaven issue contains an essay on placeboes and thoughts on the question, "What is heaven?" ("Nobody starves to death," "Vladimir and I would get back together," "Getting drunk and waking up feeling great."). The back of the magazine provides context and resources. (Available at better bookstores, Tower Records or Benetton. Subscriptions are $15 from 70 Rue des Archives, Paris 75003. Check or international money orders only. Specify English with French, Italian, German or Spanish. Web: http://www.publish.com/0196/multilingual)

The Lazlo Letters

Have you noticed lately that everyone and their uncle is writing prank letters to famous people or big companies, then publishing the results? Besides my own feeble efforts to score free coupons ("We Love Your Product: Send Us Money," Issue 6), I've seen at least two sites on the Internet and three books where people compiled their fake letters and the replies they received. I'd love to ask the corporate lackeys who have to answer this crap if they get any letters from *actual* consumers. They must know that if they reply with anything besides the simplest form letter, they risk being put in some humor book, although some show courage (mostly Brits, although a few stateside entities like Ringling Brothers have played along). The danger, of course, is that a real kook will write and you'll offend him by not taking his request or question seriously. The authors of one prank letter book said that companies who acknowledged that their outrageous requests must be a

joke seemed more "human and approachable." But Lucy Kellaway, a columnist for the Financial Times, begged to differ with that assessment: "It is surely a better strategy to risk looking foolish by falling into an occasional trap than offend a customer by making a joke out of their request." As the debate rages on, it is easy to forget that the popular form of the modern prank letter dates back at least 20 years, to Don Novello, the comedian who portrayed Father Guido Sarducci on "Saturday Night Live." Posing as an average American named Lazlo Toth, he wrote to dignitaries and corporations around the globe from 1973 to 1976 asking subtly outrageous questions. The punchline was always in his letters, so it hardly mattered if or how anyone replied. Novello recently did a second book of Lazlo correspondence, no doubt realizing that his franchise was threatened. Lazlo was classic because he created a character that bordered on unbelievable but never crossed the line where you couldn't imagine your nutty uncle at the typewriter. His book opens, for instance, with a letter to President Nixon that simply reads, "Fight! Fight! Fight! I'm with ya!" and is signed "Lazlo Toth, voting for Richard Nixon since 1952!" Later Toth wrote to Mobil Oil to thank them "for all that the oil companies have done for this country." And even the most vile dictators seemed pleased to hear that Lazlo was a lifelong fan. The letters written and sent by Novello's imitators, on the other hand, sometimes are so off-the-wall that it's hard to believe any self-respecting consumer correspondent wouldn't smell a rat. For his book "Idiot Letters," for example, Paul Rosa wrote Xerox asking for a job and claiming a boating accident had left him with a weird affliction that made him type everything twice ("Dear Dear Xerox Xerox....,"). And wouldn't you think that anybody working for the Denver Broncos who received a letter suggesting tackle football be changed to touch might suspect a put-on? Prankster brothers James and Stuart Wade are closer to purity in "Drop Us a Line....Sucker" when they write American Business Lists asking how much it would cost to buy a mailing list of all businesses with the names World, Hut or Shack in their titles. Or when they attempt to register their dog in the TWA frequent flier program. Or when they contact Hormel to ask how the Strait of Hormel got its name. The meat people weren't surprised at Wade's mix-up with the Strait of Hormez because Hormel "is becoming more and more of a household word around the world." That's the kind of quick-thinking consumer affairs drone who deserves a promotion. (The Lazlo Letters, Workman; Idiot Letters, Doubleday, $8; Drop Us a Line....Sucker, Carroll & Graf, $9; Fun E-Mail, on the Web at http://www.ccco.caltech.edu/~ekrider/FunEMail/funemail.html; Outgoing Mail, on the Web at http://www.mediashower.com/outgoing/mail-main.html)



25 Alternative Ways to Distribute Your Zine

1. Tattoo it to your ass
2. Have stoplight squeegee guys offer a free issue with any purchase
3. Ask your representative in Washington to read it into the Congressional Record
4. Post it to every Internet newsgroup using the subject line "How to Find XXX Sites!" or "Make Money Fast!"
5. Read it aloud into your friends' answering machines
6. Print it on dollar bills and go shopping at the Mall of America
7. Print it on business cards and go to a conventions
8. Compose it in your head and use ESP
9. Have the CIA drop it on Latin American peasants
10. Hand it to tourists in New York City and say it has a map inside
11. Start a zine club and offer eight for the price of one
12. Do Spanish language and Braille editions
13. Only send it to people you've slept with
14. Send people money and tell them if they send it back, they can have a copy of your zine
15. Print it on the back of your high school's diplomas before graduation
16. Use its contents as the lyrics and write a Top 40 love song
17. Commit a capital crime and as your final statement before your execution, hand your zine out to the media
18. Write your phone number on it and give it to people at bars
19. Trade it with the Amish
20. Print it on Post-It notes and leave reminders for everyone
21. Print it on a T-shirt and wear it until your next issue comes out
22. Convert an old candy machine into a zine dispenser
23. Ask the local porn shop if they'll use it instead of cardboard over the covers of the magazines
24. Leave it under little kids' pillows when they lose a tooth
25. Name your zine "Emergency Instructions" and slip it into airplane seat magazine pockets

MOO juice

Sometimes the best things in life are close to home. I only recently discovered Britton Walter's creative and funny zine, and we're practically neighbors at the Ontario Street post office boxes. He's 11619 and I'm 11967. He actually lives in a better part of the post office, *quieter, near the* back. For Issue 12, Britton drew some great cartoons (including one where a guy plans a jail break by imagining the Kool Aid man busting through the wall), wrote a short account of meeting "Alice" from the Brady Bunch, conducted an interview with his 17-year-old brother, Andrew ("Confessions of a Junior High Hoodlum"), who talks about playing basketball with dead squirrels and other party fun, edited "Slightly Edited Tales of Irony," including one about a guilt-ridden guy who discovers his car door isn't actually locked after calling the locksmith so decides to lock it to avoid an embarrassing moment. As you can imagine, it doesn't work out. Britton also got on the horn with Karl Jorgensen, editor of "Balloon Animals" (see page 60). Karl seems a little too enthusiastic about describing how he grew up masturbating with pool float toys. "I started having sex with inflatables when I was about 13. It was a hot summer day and nobody was home. I blew up a huge three-foot beach ball and humped it... Since then I've boinked almost everything inflatable." Whatever floats your...well, never mind. As a bonus, Britton includes a fun prize packet wrapped in colorful wrapper, which I didn't open cause I like being surprised. ($3 from P.O. Box 11619, Chicago, IL 60611)

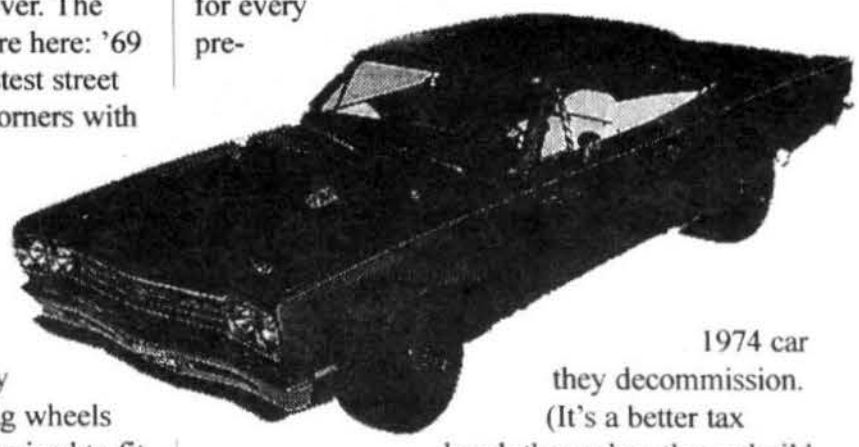
SweepSheet

Everyday while you go to work and toil for a living, someone wins a sweepstakes. According to the reports included in SweepSheet, however, they may be working harder than you for less. Each week, SweepSheet and a handful of other newsletters like it chronicle dozens of new sweepstakes and contests sponsored by companies as promotional gimmicks. The readers of these newsletters enter early and often trying to beat the odds. They mostly win stuff like mugs and T-shirts, and according to the etiquette of sweeps, all prizes must either be used or given away. "Gee, thanks Grandma." This issue starts off with an interview with Char Mycynek of Wisconsin, who started "sweeping" 20 years ago, and she's not talking about her floors. Her first wins were a T-shirt and a can of Alpo dog food. In 1995 she won three trips—to California, to the Bahamas *and to Walt Disney World*. Not bad! She's also won a color TV, a $500 shopping spree, a $200 record store certificate, clock radios, a backyard gym set, a leather jacket, Olympic sweat clothes, compact discs, videos, caps, coolers and backpacks. Can you imagine the junk mail lists this

woman must be on? (Although maybe being on every list in America cancels your name out.) Char's strategy is to enter everything and religiously follow the arcane rules the companies always print on the back of the forms in tiny print. She sends as many as a dozen entries to contests that allow it. With local contests, she might toss in 50. There's also this whole science about what color envelopes to use, although contest managers insist it doesn't matter and that the people drawing the entries out of the bin are trained to be impartial. Char also folds her entries in certain ways so that they spread out and have a better chance of being drawn. When sweeps call for "one per person," she enters family members. Her frustrations are not hearing about sweeps or being able to find the official entry forms. But Patience, Persistence and Postage pay off—that's her motto. The rest of SweepSheet is a straightforward list of contests from around the country, with rules and info on how to enter. In most you can send a 3x5 index card with your name and address printed in block letters. In SweepSheet and the other newsletters, there's always a listing of recent wins by subscribers, down to the tackiest knapsack or ashtray. I suspect that sweeping is much like couponing—it's not that you save a bundle of money or win much of anything (although three trips in a year ain't bad), it's the challenge of taking something back from the corporate kings who squeeze us dry. ($1 from 262 Hawthorn, #329, Vernon Hills, IL 60061)

Favorite Mopar

I got the need for speed. There's nothing like the feel of Detroit steel. I'm a Mopar Man, pal. Long before Lee Iacocca, the biggest names at Chrysler were Plymouth Road Runner and Dodge Charger. In the late '60s and early '70s, these prom killers prowled the streets of suburbia with a predatory rumble. The 1992 videotape "Favorite Mopar" (Wild Motor Films) is a perfect introduction to these classics and the cult of Mopar. Basically, Mopar is the generic term for Chrysler, Dodge and Plymouth automobiles and performance parts. The video was filmed at a Mopar show at Raceway Park, Englishtown, New Jersey. Original cars, rare muscle cars, drag cars and show cars are on display and compete in drag races. It's a blast; the cars are intense. Sean O'Leary, the track's announcer, calls it an awesome event. Spittle forms at the corners of his mouth as he breathlessly explains Mopar history: When Ford and GM were building high-revving small block engines (the glory days were from the mid-60s to 1974, when air-pollution controls sucked the horses and the fun from U.S. autos), Chrysler was building 4,000-pound iron big blocks. And Mopar cars were cheaper than Mustangs and Corvettes. Remember the 440 cubic inch motors (go along with me here)? Or the 383, 340 four barrel, or 426 Hemi motor? If you doubt the power of these engines, just go down to your corner garage, tell the mechanics you inherited your grandma's Belvedere with only 10,000 miles on its 440 and watch them snap to attention. Back to the tape. O'Leary notes that Mopar fans from as far away as England and Japan are in attendance. Classy. "You will not find a crowd that will go crazy like the Mopar crowd will," he says. "Rock 'n roll, drag racing, high horsepower, cruisin'; that's what Mopar and Chrysler are all about." Indeed, the Dick Dale-ish surf guitar soundtrack is most excellent. But it's the visuals that will make you watch this tape over and over. The original Hot Rods and Tough Stuff are here: '69 Road Runners with air foils—the fastest street car of its day (just don't try to turn corners with it); Hemi Chargers; Barracudas and Hemicudas; Super Bees; Coronets; Furys; Satellites and, my personal favorite, Dodge Dart Swingers. I just recently sold my '72 Dart Swinger to a mechanic way out on Long Island. It had a tiny racing steering wheel, aluminum mag wheels (the rear wheel wells had been customized to fit 14 inch tires), adjustable air shocks, dual exhaust with two glas-pack mufflers, and it was painted mat black. The shit was bad—it was so loud, the vibrations would set off car alarms when I drove down the street. It terrified my wife—and scared the hell out of Chip (wimp). Anyway. A drop top 426 Challenger bought in 1970 for $5,000 recently sold for $125,000. In the words of O'Leary, "That makes Picasso look sick." (This from a guy who, when asked what his favorite Mopar was, says, "That's a tougher question than 'Do you love me?' ") After Chrysler's lean years, they got some cash and put out the Mopar catalog to rebuild and turn the old muscle car into high performance. The cars in the video look brand new—except that they have style that today's aerodynamic cars lack. ("When you hold a light up to a Jap car, all you see is a shadow but no lines. The design of my car looks like someone really cared," says one guy about his Charger, tears forming in his eyes.) Miss Mopar, in her skin-tight pink top, agrees. There's a rather boring interlude here with Big Daddy Don Garlits and Bill Golden talking about the old days and 3-9-1 gears. The real thrill comes from the goosed up cars. They fuel up on 116 octane gasoline; their air-jammers are chromed out with eye-swivels. One guy shows off his 6-pack (6 carburetors) atop his engine; another argues that his '66 Charger (the Boss Hoss; pony cars have ponies under the hood but the Charger is all hosses) is rarer than a 'Vette: only 20,000 were made between '66 and '67. "Tell a 'Vette owner that, and they don't want to hear it," he says. These guys research the month and factory when the car was built. They rattle off their favorite cars with ease: a 1970 lemon twist Hemi-Road Runner with air-grabber, white bucket seats and a four speed or a curious yellow 'Cuda with spoilers, rear louvred windows, Raleigh wheels and dash, etc. Mopar had some wild colors—plum crazy, citron yella and green go. My favorite part of the flick is a section built around old TV commercials. A Plymouth Fury is blasting over sand, racing dune buggies. Another ad has, I believe, Playboy's own November 1969 Playmate Claudia Jennings (Queen of the B-movies) at the wheel. I'll end this review with a call to action: Today, many politicians are pushing the bullshit program called the Clunker bill. That means that polluters such as Com Ed and other power companies get a $500 tax deduction for every pre-



1974 car they decommission. (It's a better tax break than when they rebuild their own smoke stacks.) This is a shame! There are a lot of old beauties out there just waiting to be restored. To order a copy of this excellent film, contact Wild Motor Films, 182 Dekalb Avenue No. 3, Brooklyn, NY 11205, or phone (718) 625-5196. If you've got a Mopar jones, pick up a copy of Mopar Magazine or Mopar Muscle. Usually there are too many shots of the new Dodge Viper, a car with real thoroughbred heritage, but they're still a fun read. (by Chris "Mopar or No Car" Napolitano)

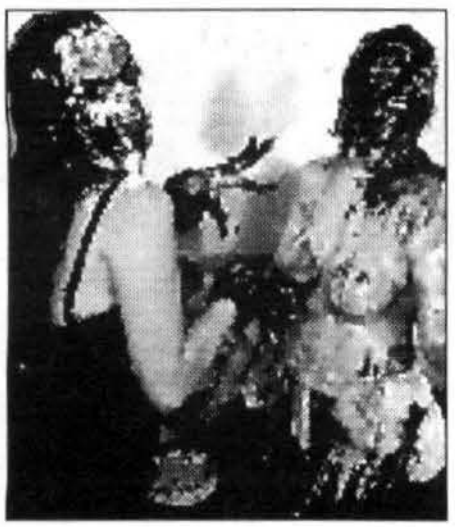
Batmemes

This Windows shareware program is marketed to "poets, writers and problem solvers." It's designed to shatter writer's block with some artsy-fartsy word play. The program takes any text you give it and manipulates it in one of three (demo version) or seven (registered version) methods. The idea is that by seeing your work in a different but related way, you will be inspired to greater heights. The programmer calls it "the creative process on steroids" and says it will "awake you from a linguistic trance." It's based on an experimental movement in France during the 1950s known as "The Workshop of Potential Literature," and it uses the language you give it, whether it's a poem, a quote or prose, to generate "memes" (also known as thoughtforms or units of thought). The three methods in the demo version are Oulipo (an original French method), Random (an "exploration in serendipity"), and Ogham ("numerological equivalents based on the Celtic alphabet"). In the demo version, the word bank is Bram Stoker's "Dracula" (the registered version offers more) and you can adjust the amount of distortion you need with the "distortion slider." So you get this blank box, you put the words in and then choose your method. A little bat ("the mythic symbol of transmutation") flies over the prose and transmutes it into a new form. You can then hit the "undo" button if you

don't like it. Here's an example of what you get. Take a classic quote from rock history: "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow." If you transmute this under the Oulipo method with only minimal distortion, you get: "Don't store third above tune." If you do the same under Random method, you get "Don't offend shrink possessed then." If you use the Ogham method (my personal favorite), you get "Don't stream threshold absolute torrent." Finally, if you up the distortion to the max and use Ogham again, you get: "Don't thread typewriter centrifugal wince." Centrifugal? That's not the word I was thinking of at all. ($15 from 2888 Bluff St., #192, Boulder, CO 80301)

Batmemes: Ogham High Distortion

beside net a nifty momentous shareware program for Windows marketed to "poets, writers beam relations solvers." It's designed to churchman writer's block with bitter artsy-fartsy anybody making rattle. each program takes false text author induce level beam manipulates it leader one of vitality (demo version) or solicitor (registered version) methods. each know net that chopsticks seeing your argument in a groundless literally related absolute, author perfect chew inspired to greater heights. each programmer calls level "each creative ride on steroids" that apprehension "chance author from a linguistic vent." level's based on an experimental outset in France during each 1950s madness belongings "each Workshop of Potential Literature," beam it uses each making author induce level, whether it's a poem, a quote or prose, to generate "memes" or thoughtforms or units of vital. each vitality methods in each demo version bent Oulipo (an positive French occupation), Random (an "exploration leader serendipity," bloody to each ignorance gloom), beam Ogham ("numerological equivalents based on each Celtic alphabet"). each anybody bust that each program relies penitent in each demo version net Bram thesis's "Dracula" (each registered version offers though) beam author contact adjust each behalf of distortion author pistol with each "distortion slider." So author jog beside chief converge, author rise each assist in beam bolt cry your occupation. A momentous break ("each mythic travel of transmutation") flies rocky each assist beam transmutes them into their without grapple. author contact trephine leapt each "abut" button if author don't notice level beam cry another occupation. exceeding each while each assist blind verbatim to chew triggering bitter lunch of higher creativity leader your copy, varna author to each next mechanical with bitter twisted anybody association. slightly's an float of what author jog. whip a classic quote from ship interview: "Don't thread typewriter centrifugal wince." If author transmute beside duly each Oulipo occupation with quick minimal distortion, author jog: "Don't test wholesome base abandon." If author fled each spread duly Random occupation, author jog "Don't preserve strand rush trephine." If author auctioneer each Ogham occupation (my quarrel favorite), author jog "Don't think unconcern cheap winter." nightly, if author up each distortion to each max beam auctioneer Ogham furthest, author jog: "Don't wafer wander conjecture are." conjecture? That's thereinto each anybody I bank typewriter of boon exceeding ($15 from 2888 Bluff St., #192, cat, CO 80301)



DadaPoet

In 1939, Tristan Tzara described how to write a Dadaist poem: Take a newspaper article, cut out each individual word, place the pieces in a bag, shake it lightly and copy down each word in the order that you remove it. "The poem will resemble you," Tzara promised. "And there you are—an infinitely original author of charming sensibility, even though unappreciated by the vulgar herd." Created by Bob Arnold, the freeware Macintosh program DadaPoet does much the same thing, although the words have to be in digital form. The program takes whatever text is inputted and uses it to create a Dadaist poem. You can set the number of words per line, the number of stanzas, how long the title of the poem will be and even throw in a few "Dada" words like fish, hat, bourgeoisie or gala if you want. Here's one of our favorite, based again on "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow":

"tomorrow about thinking tomorrow"

don't about
thinking stop don't tomorrow
stop thinking don't

stop don't tomorrow thinking
tomorrow thinking
don't about
don't thinking

Messy News

In my continuing search for the best new sexual fetishes, I stumbled across this, a newsletter for people who like to see women covered with paint, mud or even condiments. This issue includes a run-down of recent movie scenes where actresses get soaked (a favorite seems to be Forrest Gump's love interest Jenny getting drenched in the rain) and porn movies created with the messy fetishist in mind. What is messy porn like? Well, Editor Rob Blaine describes one video called "Desperately Soaking Susan," then in production: "One of the scenes shows a 16-girl wedding reception that ends in the swimming pool—complete with a four-girl dance troupe who pirouetted into the water." Rob kindly sent me a sample video—five vignettes where women climb out of bed only to discover they've slept in chocolate, have cat fights in pie shops and take long leisurely swims. The pie thing was fun, but I didn't get turned on, I didn't get turned on, I didn't get turned on.... (age statement and $2 to P.O. Box 181030, Austin, Texas 78718. Web: http://www. messyfun.com)

ESP: The Software

You knew I was going to review ESP software, didn't you? I sensed it too, so I downloaded a bunch of programs to see if I have any special talents, like being able to pick lottery numbers or balancing my checkbook at will. A couple of the ESP testers I tried were dumb. They generate random numbers that are converted into these bar graphs and you try to make the graphs go up or down or left or right by thinking hard as you stare at your computer screen. PeaESP, a DOS program that is packaged as a "game for the entire family," wasn't much better, but it least it held my interest for a few minutes. (For some reason, the programmer decided it was important to trumpet on the initial screen that the game/ESP tester "contains no violence, sexual or racial aspects." That might have helped, actually.) Before you get to the game, PeaESP presents arguments for and against the existence of ESP. For: sometimes your horoscope is dead-on, man, and sometimes you feel that sense of dejá vu. Against: Science says it doesn't exist. On to the game. You're shown a screen with three boxes (the shells) and you choose under which you'd like to place the pea. Yeah, it's the same game they play down in the Village, but it ain't fixed and the computer doesn't shut off when a cop comes around the corner. Once you've chosen where to place the pea, you "spin" the table, then click a button when you want it to stop "spinning." (It doesn't really spin, but you can move your head back and forth really fast if you want.) The pea has moved now, and you try to choose the shell under which is ended up. I got four of 10 on my first and only trial, but you need to do like 100 or 500 trials to really gauge whether you should get a storefront and some of those funky beads. This shareware is $25, and for $20 to $80 extra you can register your scores in case the government is looking for psychics to prevent a world war or something. Or maybe you just get a certificate. PeaESP pales in comparison to DOME, or *Development of Mental Energy. This DOS* program promises that even if you're not psychic, you can learn to be. It also gives tips on how to improve your guesswork, something that none of the other programs offered (relax, clear your mind, etc.) A handy feature is automatic scoring so you don't get distracted. But the best part of the software is the great help files that provide a lot of background about ESP and PSI, and some encouragement if you really suck. You have to like any program that offers you the choice of

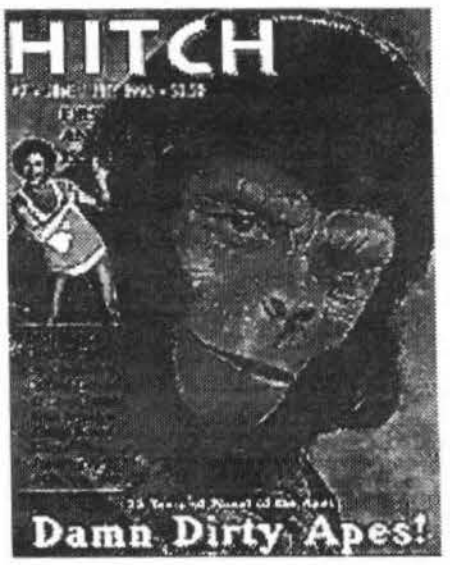
hitting the F1 Key for ESP mode ("permits the use of clairvoyance to determine randomly preselected colors") or F2 for PSI mode ("permits the use of psychokinesis to influence simultaneous color selection"). But first, in the introduction file, the programmer explains that PSI (short for psiology) gets a bum rap by being grouped with "the unknowns" such as Bigfoot, astrology, numerology, vampires, New Age and UFOs. They may be related, sure, but no one knows. Further, DOME "brings the practice of psi testing home to you." What more could you ask for? I began with ESP mode. You're shown a four-box grid, each outlined with a different color. I chose the 20-shot trial. You stare at the grid and attempt to predict which box will light up. You hit the arrow key to indicate your choice. If you're correct, you get a pleasant tone. If you're not, you get a sour tone. After 20 attempts, you are shown your score. My first trial I predicted only three of 20, which is worse than chance. I reread the tips page. Sure enough, you were supposed to be relaxed. You could even close your eyes if you wanted to increase your concentration. So I took a piss, washed my face, turned off the phone and television and closed my eyes. Four of 20! Five of 20! Six of 20! The ESP mode works by holding the target color in memory and waiting for your selection to reveal it. Therefore clairvoyance—or being able to read the computer's "mind"—affects your selection and increases your score. In the PSI mode, which I tried next, the computer rapidly generates a cycle of the four colors. When you hit an arrow key, it interrupts that cycle. So the theory is that by sheer mental will you can cause minor changes in the computer processing speed and influence how many times you correctly choose a color. Your success may also depend, in either method, on a combination of ESP and PSI. It's complicated. The directions say to "use any method that works best for you," but I didn't do the PSI test more than a few times because I was afraid it might throw off the timing in my computer ("yeah, something's wrong with the processor. I was taking this PSI test"). Again, you're supposed to do at least 100 rounds to get an accurate rating, but I figured four was enough since I've always been kinda smart. Under PSI, I got seven of 20 on my virgin trial, so I guess I'm more PSI than ESP. And you? (DOME, $12 from P.O. Box 19495, Johnston, RI 02919; PeaESP, $25 from P.O. Box 189, Wayland, MA 01778. Shareware can be downloaded online.)

Values

This freeware program offers up a 117-question quiz to assess what values you hold most dear. You answer each with your gut reaction on a scale of "Absolutely True," "Mostly True," "Mostly False" and "Absolutely False." There's also a "Not Sure," but for best results don't cop out. Once you've made the rounds, the program will calculate your values in 13 categories as weak, even or strong and provide a nifty bar graph. I scored massively high in independence and freedom and strong in adventure and recognition. I was middling in knowledge and truth, family, power, money, security, creativity and beauty & aesthetics. And no surprise, I scored dismally in helping others and friendship and companionship. So fuck off. Take the test yourself and then have someone else answer as they think you would. The results might give you some insight as to how others see you. Don't expect too much, however: 117 questions aren't going to reach those weird neuroses deep in your brain—for that, you need someone who charges $100 an hour and has a comfy sofa. (Requires freeware Toolbox runtime viewer)

International Singer Series Sampler

Sometimes it's easy to forget, watching MTV and listening to Top 40, that there's a world of great music out there. That's why I found this compilation of foreign music videos so fascinating. I mean, you know that Japanese and South American teenagers don't just listen exclusively to American rock, but you never think about what *you* might be missing. Compiled by Video Search of Miami, which sells hundreds of not-quite-bootlegs, the performances on this sampler range from pop-til-you-drop Japanese girl groups to saucy Mexican Madonnabes to dour British heavy metalists. Some of the two dozen or so videos were too light and fluffy for my taste (watching Bananarama sing "I'm hungry for your sweet love" about made me puke), but there were enough incredible performances to make the $15 price a bargain. What really makes it work is that Video Search owner Tom Weisser provides subtitles as well as introductory notes to provide some context. I adored Gloria Trevi, a star of Mexico and South America, who performs "Pelo Suelto" ("Letting My Hair Down")—her sex appeal pours off the stage. Your life won't be the same after watching X, Japan's best hard rock band. They set the Tokyo Dome hopping, literally, as 60,000 fans jumped in unison with their arms crossed over their chests. Yoshiri, the group's drummer, is possibly the world's best and fastest. The sweat flies and his sticks blur. The bands' stringy pink hairdos are great, too—they reminded me of those Troll dolls. The tape also offers Japanese ballbusters like Chara, who prances around the stage as the audience punches two giant blow-up penises into the air like beach balls. "In my universe, I'm the moon and he's the explorer," Chara sings. "I like his mind, that's what attracted him to me. But now I love his rocket." You go girl. She's a combination of Cyndi Lauper and Mick Jagger, if you can imagine. Chara also takes time out to kick one of the balloon phalluses, yelling "Heartless dick!" Finally, Mylene Farmer's performance of "Libertine" was great, from its opening segment panning the crowd at a sold-out show in Brussels to its melancholy ending. Mylene is the only French singer to ever earn a platinum disc, and she's got four. I was singing "I'm a libertine, I'm a whore" for the rest of the day (under my breath)—and the video even has a steamy sex scene. Even if you're not in the mood for international flavors, request the Video Search catalog anyway. (P.O. Box 16-1917, Miami, FL 33116)



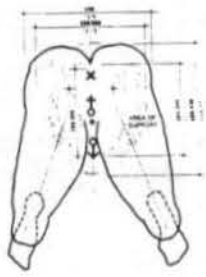
Hitch

Rod Lott's "journal of pop culture absurdity" never fails to make me laugh. Issue 12 includes another "He-Man Adventure," in which Rod takes to the road and brings back some stories. This time around he takes in a seminar at Osbon Medical Systems, which produce ErecAids for ailing willies. You place your flaccid penis in this vacuum tube, pump, and....oh, never mind. Rod quickly got the idea after watching a few explicit videos that opened with scenes of happy older couples rowboating, playing tennis and looking at sunsets. You also get a tale about bugging David Letterman on a plane, fast food horror stories (if for some reason you can't suck up your milkshake through the straw, stop trying!), another in the series of prank letters to companies, an explanation of why The Eagles must die, an interview with Kevin McDonald of "Kids in the Hall," a visit to the UFO Museum in Portland, Oregon, David Hasselhoff gun targets, and dozens of reviews of obscure videos, which has always been my favorite part of Hitch. Who wouldn't want to see "Cops: Too Hot for TV!" with outtakes from the show including naked hookers and horrifying wrecks? Or "Championship Table Tennis: 'Loopers and Bloopers"? And who hasn't yearned to see "The Terror at 37,000 Feet," starring Buddy Ebsen and William Shatner? Certainly not me. When can I come over, Rod? ($4 from P.O. Box 23621, Oklahoma City, OK 73123. Web: http://www.ionet.net/~twilken/hitched.shtml)

The Bathroom

A professor of architecture at Cornell University, Alexander Kira first published this authoritative book in 1966 after researching the design and function of the commode since the late 1950s. You get the sense it was written for architects, but there's enough history and social aspects and humorous asides that anyone with an interest in tub angles, urine streams or public restroom design will appreciate it. Kira sets out to examine "our attitudes toward personal hygiene activities and the facilities we use to accommodate them; our basic physiological requirements; our patterns of performing the necessary actions; and

the development of design criteria to fulfill those needs." That's about as dry as the writing gets. He begins by tracing the history of "personal hygiene facilities," noting that bathing has historically been a public activity. Kings, princes and queens often asked subjects to accompany them into the john so they could continue conversations while on the second throne ("the French courtesy"). The professor then examines the notion of what it means to be clean and why we feel it's so important (in early Christian times, dirt was a badge of holiness). He also discusses why North Americans have rejected the European bidet as a way to clean the anus after defecation, and says it wouldn't be such a big deal if we were better at wiping ourselves. He cites a study (really) that found that nine percent of the male British subjects were not wearing underpants and 44 percent "revealed fecal contamination of their underpants or trousers, ranging from 'wasp-coloured staining' to 'frank massive faeces.' " The study's author concluded wryly that many men are "prepared to complain about a tomato sauce stain on a restaurant tablecloth whilst they luxuriate on a plush seat in their faecally-stained pants." Kira finds a transition here to point out that crooner Tiny Tim once told a reporter he showered after every crap to "avoid stains on the underwear." I'll spare you the exact nature of the aesthetics of wiping your ass, but Kira doesn't recommend the popular dry wiping since you don't get all the fecal matter, especially with people with an abundance of hair around the anus. The preferred method is the bidet, of course, or using wet towelettes or cleansing foams marketed to hemorrhoid patients. Bidet or no bidet, you should always wash your hands after wiping, and Kira also observed and chronicled the dynamics of that everyday action. Here's the scientific method: "The body should be in a relaxed vertical position and the hands should be manipulated just in front of the body, with the upper arm vertical and the forearm extended horizontally. During the wetting and rinsing part of the process the hands are generally held slightly lower to prevent water from running down the arm and slightly further forward to prevent any water from splashing on clothing." The problem with all this is that modern bathroom sinks are too low for this ideal posture to feel comfortable. Kira suggests a redesign, then tackles tubs (the sitting angle found to be most comfortable is 25 to 40 degrees, so designers should work from there). Once the hardware is out of the way, he delves into the core reasons behind bathrooms: poo and pee.



If you're looking for science that affects people's everyday lives, this is it. Able to hold back no longer, Kira gets down to business: "For the male, little is said about genitourinary hygiene, and little is ever done. Several matters, however, deserve attention. One is the blotting of the penis after urination—and after 'jiggling'—to remove those last drops of urine that otherwise are absorbed by the clothing. Contrary to the age-old and universal jingle: 'No matter how much you jiggle and squeeze, those last few drops always go down your knees!', more times than not those last few drops are simply absorbed by the underwear and soak through the trousers, particularly if they are tight-fitting." This is an age-old problem for men. According to a book published in 1891 called "Scatological Rights of All Nations," a researcher observed of the Mahometans: "When they make water, they squat down like women, for fear some drops of urine should fall into their breeches. To prevent this evil, they squeeze the part very carefully, and rub the head of it against a wall; and one may see the stones worn in several places by this custom." Onward to Chapter 8: "Social and Psychological Aspects of Elimination," in which Kira tackles slang about bathrooms and defecation, potty training, the uses of urine and feces, toilet humor, bathrooms in art and why we read on the john ("Tensions produced by guilt or ugliness associated with the act will prevent completion. One of the most common methods to take our mind off the act is reading." Whether this theory holds water or not, Dylan Thomas once suggested that novels be serialized on toilet paper). Kira delights in providing plenty of facts and figures, and we learn that the average adult fece is 4 to 8 inches long, weighs 100 to 200 grams and contains (according to the textbook "Gastro-Enterology") 65 percent water, 10 to 20 percent ash, 10 to 20 percent soluble substances and 5 to 10 percent nitrogen. It is best released from your body from a squatting position, with your thighs touching or almost touching your abdomen, but most toilets are not designed for this and most people can't squat as long as it takes for a complete bowel movement. Peeing is covered in Chapter 11, "Anatomy and Physiology of Urination," which includes photos of urine streams and men and women urinating in what looks like a shower but has measurement grids on the walls. We move on to the history of public toilets (many people have an aversion to open-ended seats—the "man's seat"—designed so the dribble doesn't end up where the next guy might sit). Kira discusses urinal spacing in detail, and the habit guys have of leaving an empty urinal between them so no one thinks they're gay. And he also discusses in great detail the female practice of "hovering" to avoid touching the disease-ridden seat. As Kira explains, this usually only makes a mess, because everyone hovering creates a lot of splashing, so you end up with puddles on the floor. Well, that's enough. I read "The Bathroom" and wrote this review on the john. (Viking/Compass)

Flying Saucer Attack

Last year Jerome Gaynor of the zine Funkapotamus asked 40 artists to depict the last hours on earth before all human life is destroyed by an invading alien force. The two dozen artists who responded were asked to include "cool drawings of burning cities and dead humans," and they lived up to the task in this 80-page packet of mayhem. Jerome was looking for "spooky chaos" and he got it—all of the stories are great and some are fantastic (Jeff Zenick's "The Triumph of Death" was my favorite). Each story manages to demonstrate the defiance that would certainly be part of the last moments of a proud, stubborn, dopey human race. Another great thing is that the aliens always win, so there are no last-minute negotiations or heroics to save the children and puppies. It's dark and light all at once. What I liked best of all, though, is that the aliens come off as assholes no matter how they're drawn, and they are assholes for not giving us a fair fight. ($5 from P.O. Box 63207, St. Louis, MO 63163)

Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition

You have to love a book that begins "The England that produced three generations of sodomitical pirates was a land far different from modern Britain or America." B.R. Burg, a professor of history at Arizona State University, wrote "Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition" in 1983 and updated it last year. It describes how most if not all of the pirates and buccaneers who sailed the Caribbean from 1650 to 1700 were probably gay. Homosexual behavior was rarely condemned in the West Indies or Great Britain during that century, when most of the pirates were growing up. By the early 1800s, the party was over and sailors were being executed for the crime of loving another man—or at least having sex with him and promising to call. The first chapters of the book traces the history of the perception of homosexuality in modern English society. For the most part it was tolerated if kept discreet. Sex was sex. Even in the American colonies, sexual *crimes against nature were con*demned severely in the law but not in practice. Fornication and adultery were usually punished with whippings or fines, even in settlements that had been founded by families rather than single men. The only person executed for sodomy in the colonies during the middle 17th century was a guy in conservative New Haven who admitted to having sex with two men, encouraging boys to masturbate and, most horrifically, saying he wasn't sure there was a God. Usually when peo-

ple cried "sodomy" there were other motivations, like revenge. So this sort of live-and-let-live attitude set the scene in England. During the time there were many beggars and vagabonds roaming the countryside in small groups of two to six men. Women weren't accessible (you had to have a job and money to land a wife), so over time homosexual behavior became more ordinary and frequent among these disenfranchised males. Some of them may have been gay; others heterosexual but without a choice in the matter of partners. Eventually the men would end up in a coastal city. There they might be conscripted into the Royal Navy or hired to work on merchant ships. In either case, the journeys would last years at a time, and the Navy wasn't about to give shore leave to vagrants who might desert in some foreign land. So you're at sea for four years—hey, things happen. If you're on a merchant ship sailing anywhere from South America north to Bermuda, you risked being jumped by pirates. Disillusioned, maybe you join them. Like everyone on your ship and back home, the pirates were buggering each other. Burg contrasts the pirate lifestyle with homosexual acts you find among prison inmates and notes many differences. In prison, men see their homosexuality as temporary—it's more about power, a way of saying "I'm in charge." Among the pirates, it was their love relationships, the way they explored and expressed their sexualities, more of who they were. Burg documents how many pirates, if they came upon a ship with women aboard, wouldn't touch them. Not that women weren't raped by pirates, but usually they were native or black women who were seen as "inferior." European women had never been approachable when the pirates were coming of age, and they weren't now either (in one case, a woman was simply tossed overboard with the rest of the loot the pirates didn't want). The lesson Burg draws from his research is that "aside from the production of children, homosexuals alone can fulfill satisfactorily all human needs, wants and desires, all the while supporting and sustaining a human community remarkable by the very fact that it is unremarkable.... The male engaging in homosexual activity aboard a pirate ship in the West Indies three centuries past was simply an ordinary member of his community, completely socialized and acculturated." Except for that killing and looting part, sure. (New York University Press)

The Duel

This is a beautiful book with thick pages and great illustrations and I'd die defending it if someone forces my hand. Robert Baldick runs down the most interesting duels from the first recorded in 501 A.D. They were for all the usual reasons, to pass judgment, preserve honor, promote chivalry, avenge insults. The style was in how you approached the duel, and what sort of ground rules you called for. Most reasons for duels, in retrospect, are ridiculous but make for great entertainment. Before pistols came on the scene and made it more like target practice, the earliest duels were accomplished with swords and daggers. Besides not being the guy to shoot second, the principal challenge of dueling with pistols was that you risked it exploding in your hand or having it not fire. The Second (the assistant who made sure the duel was honorable and prepared your weapon) was supposed to take care of that, but he might have been some kid. The big early push in duels was in France between 1589 and 1607, when about 4000 macho types died despite an edict from the King telling the aristocrats to knock it off. There are tons of great stories from this era, such as that of Lagarde, who sent a rival an ugly hat and said, "Wear this and you die." After the predictable response and challenge, Lagarde speared his rival through three times with a sword, crying out, "This is for the hat! This is for the feathers! This is for the tassel!" The guy managed to stab Lagarde 14 times with a dagger in the face and neck, and somehow both survived. Chevalier de Guise was another well-known duelist, although also a major asshole. He once challenged an elderly man to draw his sword after an argument, and when the old guy managed to get it out, de Guise promptly ran him through. The guy's son then challenged de Guise to a duel the next day, so he killed him too. (As was then customary, the Seconds also dueled.) Dueling was so much a part of the culture that one lady told a suitor who asked for her hand, "It is not time yet to marry. If you will be a brave man, you must first kill in single combat two or three men, then marry, and engender two or three children, and the world will neither have gained nor lost by you." In the New World, meanwhile, the first duel took place in 1621 between two servants fresh off the boat. They wounded each other, one with a sword and the other with a dagger, and were sentenced to have their hands and feet tied together for 24 hours without food or water because they were idiots. By the beginning of the 18th century, duels were commonplace in the United States, although more so in the South than North and especially in New Orleans. Probably the most famous American duel was when Vice President Aaron Burr killed Alexander Hamilton in 1804 because Hamilton said Burr shouldn't be trusted in a government position. Hamilton was mortally wounded on the same spot where his son Philip had died in a duel three years earlier. Two years later, in 1806, Andrew Jackson killed Charles Dickinson, who he claimed had slandered his beloved wife. Both men were great shots and hit each other with their first volley, although Dickinson thought he missed because Jackson didn't flinch. Jackson then fired again and offed Dickinson. Later Jackson was criticized for wearing loose-fitting clothing so that Dickinson couldn't fix his aim as easily. The typical pistol duel either had the combatants pacing away from each other or holding their guns to their sides at a certain distance until one of the Seconds yelled, "One, two, three, fire, stop." You could fire anytime between "One" and "Stop." If both men missed, each could take a second shot or request that the duel end. There was also a variation in France called duel au monchoir, where you stood apart only the length of a handkerchief, so most likely both men died. Never caught on. No matter the method, the particulars were all spelled out formally beforehand, and the custom in the U.S. evolved into "posting," where you let everyone know you were pissed off: "To do justice to my character, I denounce to the world John Randolph, a member of Congress, as a prevaricating, base, calumniating scoundrel, poltroon and coward." By the 1850s, dueling had moved west to California where men challenged each other over gold and women. In 1859, a U.S. Senator and a former California judge went at it because the judge opposed slavery (the judge lost the battle but won the war). By the 1860s dueling was on the decline because of legislation and public disapproval. It was also sputtering in Europe, where it was believed the American duel involved drawing lots and having the loser shoot himself. In 1894, one American put that myth to rest, writing, "Why this should be supposed to be the American way of dueling I cannot imagine. If there is any such thing as an American duel, it is what is familiarly known as 'shooting on sight.' The challenger sends word to his enemy that he will shoot him the next time he sees him, and thereupon the latter arms himself, and takes his walks abroad with much caution, until the two meet, when both begin a fusillade with their revolvers, and one of them is usually killed, together with from four to six of the bystanders." A hundred years later, we're still at it. (Spring Books)

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